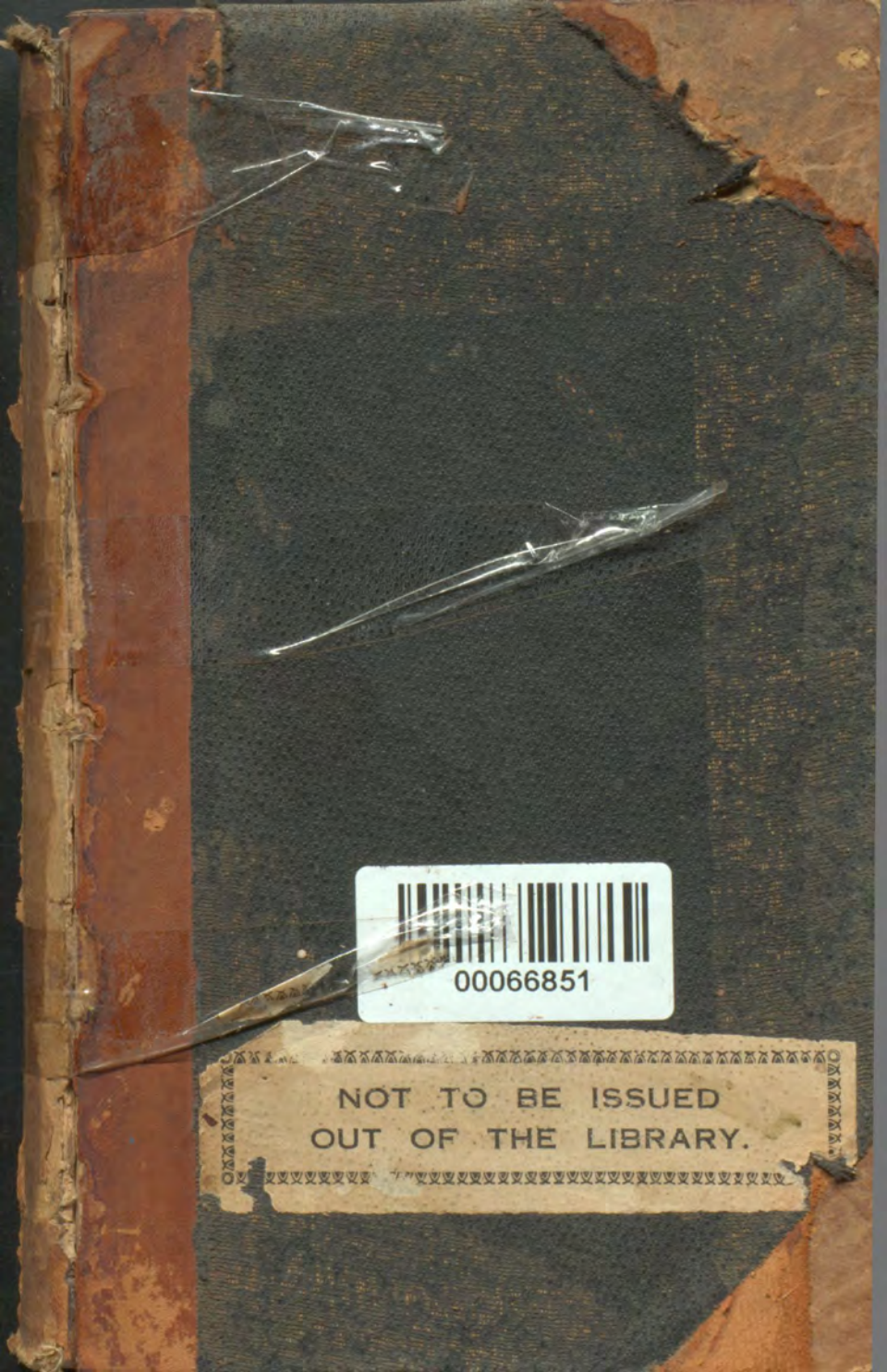
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THE

WORKS

OF

ROBERT HALL, A.M.

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WITH A BRIEF MEMOIR OF HIS LIFE,

BY DR. GREGORY;

AND OBSERVATIONS ON HIS CHARACTER AS A PREACHER,

BY JOHN FOSTER.

PUBLISHED UNDER THE SUPERINTENDENCE OF

OLINTHUS GREGORY, LL.D. F.R.A.S.

PROFESSOR OF MATHEMATICS IN THE ROYAL MILITARY ACADEMY.

VOL. IV.

REVIEWS AND MISCELLANEOUS PIECES.

A d 22

THIRD EDITION.

LONDON:

HOLDSWORTH AND BALL,

AMEN CORNER, PATERNOSTER ROW.

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CONTENTS OF VOL. IV.

ARTICLES FROM THE ECLECTIC REVIEW.

	Page
Foster's Essays	3
Custance on the Constitution	37
Zeal without Innovation	46
Gisborne's Sermons	126
Gregory's Letters	141
Belsham's Memoirs of Lindsey	188
Birt on Popery	226

MISCELLANEOUS PIECES.

Fragment on Popery	241
Character of the Rev. R. Hall, of Arnsby	262
Funeral Oration delivered at the Interment of the Rev. H. Crabb	268
Sketch of the Character of Mrs. M. Carryer	280
Character of the late Rev. T. Robinson, Vicar of St. Mary's, Leicester	284
Fragment.—Character of the Rev. John Sutcliff	302
Memoir of the Rev. Thomas Toller	305
Preface to the Memoirs of the Rev. Joseph Freeston	347
Extract from Mr. Hall's rough Notes of the Funeral Sermon for Dr. Ryland	360

Page

Address circulated at the Formation of the Leicester Auxiliary Bible Society 363
Speech delivered at the Second Anniversary of ditto . . . 368
Speech delivered at the Seventh Anniversary of ditto . . 382
Fragment.—Speech delivered at a Meeting of ditto . . . 399
Address in Behalf of the Stepney Baptist Academy . . 407
Letter to the Committee of the Baptist Missionary Society 415
Preface to Hall's Help to Zion's Travellers 420
Preface to Janeway's Life 434
Recommendatory Preface to Beddome's Hymns 438
Preface to Chase's "Antinomianism Unmasked" 441
Letter to the Rev. W. Bennett 456
Extract from Dr. Johnson's Preface to Cowper's Correspondence 459
Spiritual Condition and Prospects of the Jews 461
Substance of a Charge delivered at the Ordination of the Rev. J. K. Hall, at Kettering 476
Fragment.—On the Art of Healing 495

ARTICLES

PUBLISHED IN

THE ECLECTIC REVIEW.

REVIEW

OF

FOSTER'S ESSAYS.

Essays, in a Series of Letters, on the following Subjects:—On a Man's writing Memoirs of Himself; On Decision of Character; On the Application of the Epithet Romantic; On some of the Causes by which Evangelical Religion has been rendered less acceptable to Persons of cultivated Taste. By JOHN FOSTER. 2 vols. 12mo. 1805. 1 vol. 8vo. pp. 458. Seventh Edition, 1823.

THE authors who have written on human nature may be properly distinguished into two classes, the metaphysical and the popular. The former contemplate man in the abstract; and, neglecting the different shades of character and peculiarities of temper by which mankind are diversified, confine their attention to those fundamental principles which pervade the whole species. In attempting to explore the secrets of mental organization, they assume nothing more for a basis than a mere susceptibility of impression, whence they labour to deduce the multiplied powers of the human mind. The light in which they choose

to consider man in their researches, is not that of a being possessed already of the exercise of reason, and agitated by various sentiments and passions, but simply as capable of acquiring them; and their object is, by an accurate investigation of the laws which regulate the connexion of the mind with the external universe, to discover in what manner they are actually acquired. They endeavour to trace back every mental appearance to its source. Considering the powers and principles of the mind as a complicated piece of machinery, they attempt to discover the *primum mobile*, or in other words, that primary law, that ultimate fact, which is sufficiently comprehensive to account for every other movement. This attention to the internal operations of the mind, with a view to analyse its principles, is one of the distinctions of modern times. Among the ancients, scarcely any thing of this sort was known. Comprehensive theories, and subtile disquisitions, are not unfrequent in their writings; but they are chiefly employed for the illustration of different modes of virtue, and the establishment of different ideas of the supreme good. Their most abstracted speculations had almost always a practical tendency. The schoolmen, indeed, were deeply immersed in metaphysical speculations. They fatigued their readers in the pursuit of endless abstractions and distinctions; but the design, even of these writers, seems rather to have been, accurately to arrange and define the objects

of thought, than to explore the mental faculties themselves. The nature of particular and universal ideas, time, space, infinity, together with the mode of existence to be ascribed to the Supreme Being, chiefly engaged the attention of the mightiest minds in the middle ages. Acute in the highest degree, and endued with a wonderful patience of thinking, they yet, by a mistaken direction of their powers, wasted themselves in endless logomachies, and displayed more of a teazing subtilty than of philosophical depth. They chose rather to strike into the dark and intricate by-paths of metaphysical science, than to pursue a career of useful discovery: and as their disquisitions were neither adorned by taste, nor reared on a basis of extensive knowledge, they gradually fell into neglect, when juster views in philosophy made their appearance. Still, they will remain a mighty monument of the utmost which the mind of man can accomplish in the field of abstraction. If the metaphysician does not find in the schoolmen the materials of his work, he will perceive the study of their writings to be of excellent benefit in sharpening his tools. They will aid his acuteness, though they may fail to enlarge his knowledge.

When the inductive and experimental philosophy, recommended by Bacon, had, in the hands of Boyle and Newton, led to such brilliant discoveries in the investigation of matter, an attempt was soon made to transfer the same method

of proceeding to the mind. Hobbes, a man justly infamous for his impiety, but of extraordinary penetration, first set the example; which was not long after followed by Locke, who was more indebted to his predecessor than he had the candour to acknowledge. His celebrated Essay has been generally considered as the established code of metaphysics. The opinions and discoveries of this great man have since been enriched by large accessions, and, on some points, corrected and amended, by the labours of Berkeley, Hume, Reid, and a multitude of other writers. Still, there seems to be a principle of mortality inherent in metaphysical science, which, sooner or later, impairs the reputation of its most distinguished adepts. It is a circumstance worthy of remark, that there has never been a reputation of this kind which has continued with undiminished lustre through the revolutions of a century. The fame of Locke is visibly on the decline; the speculations of Malebranche are scarcely heard of in France; and Kant, the greatest metaphysical name on the Continent, sways a doubtful sceptre amidst a host of opponents. It is not our intention to inquire at large into the reason of the transitory fame acquired by this class of writers. Whether it be that the science itself rests on a precarious foundation; that its discoveries can never be brought to a decisive test; that it is too remote from the business of life to be generally interesting; that it does not compensate by its use, for

its defect in the fascinations of pleasure; and that it is not, like the intricacies of law, interwoven with the institutions of society: the fact itself is unquestionable. He who aspires to a reputation that shall survive the vicissitudes of opinion and of time, must aim at some other character than that of a metaphysician.

Grand and imposing in its appearance, it seems to lay claim to universal empire, and to supply the measures and the criteria of all other knowledge; but it resembles in its progress the conquests of a Sesostris and a Bacchus, who overran kingdoms and provinces with ease, but made no permanent settlements, and soon left no trace of their achievements.

The case is very different with the popular writers, who, without attempting to form a theory, or to trace to their first elements, the vast assemblage of passions and principles which enter into the composition of man, are satisfied with describing him as he is. These writers exhibit characters, paint manners, and display human nature in those natural and affecting lights, under which it will always appear to the eye of an acute and feeling observer. Without staying to inquire why it is that men think, feel, reason, remember,—are attracted by some objects or repelled by others, they take them as they are, and delineate the infinitely various modifications and appearances assumed by our essential nature. From the general mass of human passions and manners, they detach such portions as they

suppose will admit of the most beautiful illustrations, or afford the most instructive lessons. Next to a habit of self-reflection, accompanied with an attentive survey of real life, writers of this kind are the best guides in the acquisition of that most important branch of knowledge, an acquaintance with mankind. As they profess to consider human nature under some particular aspect, their views are necessarily more limited than those of metaphysical writers; but if they are less extensive, they are more certain; if they occupy less ground, they cultivate it better. In the language of Bacon, "they come home to men's business and bosom." As they aim at the delineation of living nature, they can never deviate far from truth and reality without becoming ridiculous; while, for the fidelity of their representations, they appeal to the common sense of mankind, the dictates of which they do little more than embody and adorn. The system of Locke or of Hartley, it is possible to conceive, may be exploded by the prevalence of a different theory; but it is absurd to suppose, that the remarks on life and manners contained in the writings of Addison or of Johnson, can ever be discredited by a future moralist. In the formation of a theory, more especially in matters so subtile and complicated as those which relate to the mind, the sources of error are various. When a chain of reasoning consists of many links, a failure of connexion in any part will produce a mass of error in the result, proportioned to the length to which it is extended.

In a complicated combination, if the enumeration of particulars in the outset is not complete, the mistake is progressive and incurable. In the ideal philosophy of Locke, for example, if the sources of sensation are not sufficiently explored, or if there be, as some of the profoundest thinkers have suspected, other sources of ideas than those of sensation, the greater part of his system falls to the ground. The popular writers, of whom we have been speaking, are not exposed to such dangers. It is possible, indeed, that many particular views may be erroneous; but, as their attention is continually turned to living nature, provided they be possessed of competent talents, their general delineations cannot fail of being distinguished by fidelity and truth. While a few speculative men amuse themselves with discussing the comparative merits of different metaphysical systems, these are the writers, whose sentiments, conveyed through innumerable channels, form the spirit of the age; nor is it to be doubted, that the Spectator and the Rambler have imparted a stronger impulse to the public mind than all the metaphysical systems in the world. On this account we are highly gratified when we meet with a writer, who, to a vein of profound and original thought, together with just views of religion and of morals, joins the talent of recommending his ideas by the graces of imagination, and the powers of eloquence. Such a writer we have the happiness of reviewing at present. Mr. Foster's name is probably new to most of our

readers; but, if we may judge from the production before us, he cannot long be concealed from the notice and applause of the literary world. In an age of mediocrity, when the writing of books has become almost a mechanical art, and a familiar acquaintance with the best models has diffused taste, and diminished genius, it is impossible to peruse an author who displays so great original powers without a degree of surprise. We are ready to inquire by what peculiar felicity he was enabled to desert the trammels of custom, to break the spell by which others feel themselves bound, and to maintain a career so perfectly uncontrolled and independent. A cast of thought, original and sublime, an unlimited command of imagery, a style varied, vigorous, and bold, are some of the distinguishing features of these very singular Essays. We add, with peculiar satisfaction, that they breathe the spirit of piety and benevolence, and bear the most evident indications of a heart deeply attached to scriptural truths. Though Mr. F. has thought fit to give to his work the title of "Essays, in a Series of *Letters*," the reader must not expect any thing in the epistolary style. They were written, the author informs us, in letters to a friend, but with a view to publication; and in their distinct developement of a subject, and fulness of illustration, they resemble regular dissertations, rather than familiar epistles. We could have wished, indeed, that he had suppressed the title of Letters, as it may excite in the reader an expectation of

colloquial ease and grace, which will not be gratified in the perusal. A little attention to this circumstance, though it might have impaired the regularity of their method, would have rendered them more fascinating. The subjects appear to us well chosen, sufficiently uncommon to afford scope for original remarks, and important enough to call forth the exertions of the strongest powers. They are the following: 1. On a Man's writing Memoirs of himself: 2. On Decision of Character: 3. On the Application of the Epithet Romantic: 4. On some of the Causes by which Evangelical Religion has been rendered less acceptable to Persons of cultivated Taste.

We shall endeavour to give our readers an idea of the general design of each of these essays; and to enable them, by a few extracts, to judge of the manner in which that design is executed.

In the first essay, the author expatiates at large on the influence of external events in the formation of character. This influence he traces to four sources; instruction, companionship, reading, and attention to the state and manners of mankind.

Among the many objects calculated to form the character and impress the heart, Mr. F. enumerates natural scenery; at the same time deploring that want of fancy and sensibility, which often renders it productive of so little effect. The passage in which he adverts to this subject is so beautiful, that we cannot prevail on ourselves to withhold it from the reader. He will see at once that the

writer has viewed nature with the eye of a poet, and has deeply imbibed the delicious enchantment which he so eloquently describes.

"It might be supposed that the scenes of nature, "an amazing assemblage of phenomena, if their "effect were not lost through familiarity, would "have a powerful influence on all opening minds, "and transfuse into the internal economy of ideas "and sentiment something of a character and a "colour correspondent to the beauty, vicissitude, "and grandeur, which continually press on the "senses. On minds of genius they often have "this effect; and Beattie's *Minstrel* may be as "just as it is a fascinating description of such a "spirit. But on the greatest number this in-"fluence operates feebly; you will not see the "process in children, nor the result in mature "persons. The charms of nature are objects "only of sight and hearing, not of sensibility and "imagination; and even the sight and hearing "do not receive impressions sufficiently distinct "or forcible for clear recollection; it is not, there-"fore, strange that these impressions seldom go "so much deeper than the senses as to awaken "pensiveness or enthusiasm, and fill the mind "with an interior permanent scenery of beautiful "images at its own command. This defect of "fancy and sensibility is unfortunate amidst a "creation infinitely rich with grand and beautiful "objects, which, imparting something more than "images to a mind adapted and habituated to

"converse with nature, inspire an exquisite senti-
"ment that seems like the emanation of a spirit
"residing in them. It is unfortunate, I have
"thought within these few minutes, while looking
"out on one of the most enchanting nights of the
"most interesting season of the year, and hearing
"the voices of a company of persons, to whom
"I can perceive that this soft and solemn shade
"over the earth, the calm sky, the beautiful stripes
"of cloud, the stars, and waning moon just risen,
"are things not in the least more interesting than
"the walls, ceiling, and candle-light of a room."—
Vol. I. pp. 26, 27. [Pp. 22, 23, *Seventh Edition.*]

Towards the close of the essay, in tracing the steps by which some have arrived at the last stage of daring impiety, the denial of a God, the author evinces, in a masterly manner, the presumption of the atheist, and places the extreme absurdity of pretending to demonstrate the non-existence of a Deity, in a light in which we do not remember to have seen it exhibited. Speaking of a pretended heroism attached to atheistic impiety, he adds:

"But, indeed, it is heroism no longer, if he
"*knows* that there is no God. The wonder then
"turns on the great process by which a man could
"grow to the immense intelligence that can know
"that there is no God. What ages, and what
"lights are requisite for THIS attainment! This in-
"telligence involves the very attributes of divinity,
"while a God is denied. For, unless this man is
"omnipresent, unless he is at this moment in

"every place in the universe, he cannot know but "there may be in some place manifestations of a "Deity by which even *he* would be overpowered. "If he does not know absolutely every agent in "the universe, the one that he does not know may "be God. If he is not himself the chief agent in "the universe, and does not know what is so, "that which is so may be God. If he is not in "absolute possession of all the propositions that "constitute universal truth, the one which he "wants may be, that there is a God. If he cannot, "with certainty, assign the cause of all that exists, "that cause may be a God. If he does not know "every thing that has been done in the immea-"surable ages that are past, some things may have "been done by a God. Thus, unless he knows "all things, that is, precludes another Deity by "being one himself, he cannot know that the "Being whose existence he rejects does not exist. "But he must *know* that he does not exist, else "he deserves equal contempt and compassion "for the temerity with which he firmly avows "his rejection, and acts accordingly."—Vol. I. pp. 60—62. [Pp. 48, 49, *Seventh Edition.*]

The next essay, *On Decision of Character,* appears to us superior to the former. The subject is pursued with greater regularity, the conceptions are more profound, and the style is more chaste and classical. After placing in strong contrast the features of a decisive and of an irresolute character, he proceeds to analyse the elements

of which the former is composed. Among these, he assigns the first place to a firm confidence in our own judgement; which, he justly observes, notwithstanding the general disposition of mankind to overrate their powers, is no common attainment. With those who are most disposed to think highly of their own abilities, it is common, when they arrive at the moment of action, to distrust their judgement; and, as the author beautifully expresses it, "their mind seems all at once placed in a misty vacuity, where it reaches round on all sides, and finds nothing to lay hold of." The next ingredient essential to decision of character, is a state of cogent feeling, an intense ardour of mind, precluding indifference and delay. In addition to these qualities, courage is required, without which, it is obvious that resolutions the most maturely formed, are liable to vanish at the first breath of opposition. In the remaining part of the essay, Mr. F. illustrates the influence of several circumstances of an external nature, which tend to form or to augment the quality of which he has been treating. The principal of these are *opposition, desertion,* and *success.* It would prolong this article too much, to attempt to follow the author in these particulars; suffice it to remark, that under each of them will be found many just and important observations. He concludes with briefly recommending a discipline conducive to the attainment of a decisive character. He particularly insists on the propriety of inuring the mind

to a habit of reasoning; and that, not in a superficial and desultory manner, but by steadily following the train till we reach a legitimate conclusion.

We cannot dismiss this part of the work without presenting our readers with an extract from the character of Howard, whose virtues have been emblazoned by the gorgeous eloquence of Burke; but we are mistaken if they have ever been painted in a more masterly manner than in the following portrait:—

"In this distinction *(decision)* no man ever "exceeded, for instance, or ever will exceed, the "late illustrious Howard. The energy of his de- "termination was so great, that if, instead of being "habitual, it had been shewn only for a short time, "on particular occasions, it would have appeared "a vehement impetuosity; but by being uninter- "mitted it had an equability of manner, which "scarcely appeared to exceed the tone of a calm "constancy, it was so totally the reverse of any "thing like turbulence or agitation. It was the "calmness of an intensity, kept uniform by the "nature of the human mind forbidding it to be "more, and by the character of the individual "forbidding it to be less. The habitual passion "of his mind was a measure of feeling almost "equal to the temporary extremes and paroxysms "of common minds: as a great river in its cus- "tomary state, is equal to a small or moderate "one when swollen to a torrent. The moment "of finishing his plans in deliberation, and com-

" mencing them in action, was the same. I wonder " what must have been the amount of that bribe, " in emolument or pleasure, that would have " detained him a week inactive after their final " adjustment. The law which carries water down " a declivity, was not more unconquerable and " invariable, than the determination of his feelings " toward the main object. The importance of this " object held his faculties in a state of excitement " which was too rigid to be affected by lighter " interests, and on which, therefore, the beauties " of nature and of art had no power. He had " no leisure feeling which he could spare to be " diverted among the innumerable varieties of the " extensive scene which he traversed; all his sub- " ordinate feelings lost their separate existence " and operation, by falling into the grand one. " There have not been wanting trivial minds to " mark this as a fault in his character. But the " mere men of taste ought to be silent respecting " such a man as Howard; he is above their sphere " of judgement. The invisible spirits, who fulfil " their commission of philanthropy among mortals, " do not care about pictures, statues, and sumptu- " ous buildings; and no more did he, when the " time in which he must have inspected and ad- " mired them would have been taken from the " work to which he had consecrated his life.*

* Mr. Howard, however, was not destitute of taste for the fine arts. His house at Cardington was better filled with paintings and drawings, than any other, on a small scale, that we ever saw. — REV.

" The curiosity which he might feel, was reduced " to wait till the hour should arrive when its " gratification should be presented by conscience, " which kept a scrupulous charge of all his time, " as the most sacred duty of that hour. If he was " still at every hour, when it came, fated to feel " the attractions of the fine arts but the second " claim, they might be sure of their revenge ; for " no other man will ever visit Rome under such " a despotic consciousness of duty, as to refuse " himself time for surveying the magnificence of " its ruins. Such a sin against taste is very far " beyond the reach of common saintship to com- " mit. It implied an inconceivable severity of " conviction, that he had *one thing to do ;* and that " he, who would do some great thing in this short " life, must apply himself to the work with such " a concentration of his forces, as, to idle spec- " tators, who live only to amuse themselves, looks " like insanity. His attention was so strongly and " tenaciously fixed on his object, that, even at the " greatest distance, as the Egyptian pyramids to " travellers, it appeared to him with a luminous " distinctness as if it were nigh, and beguiled " the toilsome length of labour and enterprise by " which he was to reach it. It was so conspicuous " before him, that not a step deviated from the " direction, and every movement and every day " was an approximation. As his method referred " every thing he did and thought to the end, and " as his exertion did not relax for a moment, he

" made the trial, so seldom made—what is the " utmost effect which may be granted to the last " possible efforts of a human agent; and, there- " fore, what he did not accomplish, he might " conclude to be placed beyond the sphere of " mortal activity, and calmly leave to the imme- " diate disposal of Providence."—Pp. 156—160. [Pp. 125—128, *Seventh Edition.*]

We have one remark to make, before we conclude our review of this Essay. We are a little apprehensive, that the glowing colours in which the imagination of Mr. F. has painted an unyielding constancy of mind, may tend to seduce some of his readers into an intemperate admiration of that quality, without duly distinguishing the object to which it is directed, and the motives by which it is sustained. We give our author full credit for the purity of his principles; we are firmly persuaded that he is not to be classed among the impious idolaters of mental energy. But we could wish that he had more fully admonished his readers to regard resolution of character not as a virtue, so much as a means of virtue—a mere instrument that owes its value entirely to the purpose to which it is employed; and that, wherever nature has conferred it, an additional obligation is imposed of purifying the principles and regulating the heart. It might, at first view, be thought impossible, as Mr. F. intimates, that men should be found, who are as resolute in the prosecution of criminal enterprises, as they could be supposed to be in the

pursuit of the most virtuous objects. It is surely a melancholy proof of something wrong in the constitution of human nature, that a quality so important as that of energetic decision, is so little under the regulation of principle; that constancy is so much more frequently to be seen in what is wrong than in what is right; and, in fine, that the *world* can boast so many more heroes than the *church*.

In the third Essay, *On the Application of the Epithet Romantic*, Mr. Foster takes occasion to expose the eagerness with which terms of censure are adopted by men, who, instead of calmly weighing the merits of an undertaking, or a character, think it sufficient to express their antipathy by some opprobrious appellation. The epithet *romantic* holds a distinguished place in the vocabulary of contempt. If a scheme of action, which it requires much benevolence to conceive, and much vigour to execute, be proposed, by many it will be thought completely exploded, when they have branded it with the appellation of *romantic*. Thus selfishness and indolence, arraying themselves in the garb of wisdom, assume the pride of superiority, when they ought to feel the humiliation of guilt. To imitate the highest examples, to do good in ways not usual to the same rank of life, to make great exertions and sacrifices in the cause of religion and with a view to eternal happiness, to determine without delay to reduce to practice whatever we applaud in theory, are modes of conduct which the world will generally condemn

as romantic, but which this author shews to be founded on the highest reason. In unfolding the true idea of the *romantic*, as applicable to a train of sentiments, or course of conduct, he ascribes whatever may be justly so denominated, to the predominance of the imagination over the other powers. He points out the symptoms of this disease, as apparent—in the expectation of a peculiar destiny, while the fancy paints to itself scenes of unexampled felicity—in overlooking the relation which subsists between ends and means—in counting upon casualties instead of contemplating the stated order of events,—and in hoping to realize the most momentous projects, without any means at all, or by means totally inadequate to the effect. Some of the illustrations which the author introduces in this part of his subject are peculiarly happy. We are delighted to find him treating with poignant ridicule those superficial pretenders, who, without positively disavowing any dependence on divine agency, hope to reform the world, and to bring back a paradisaical state, by the mere force of moral instruction. For the prospect of the general prevalence of virtue and happiness, we are indebted to revelation. We have no reason to suppose the minds of our modern infidels sufficiently elevated to have thought of the cessation of wars, and the universal diffusion of peace and love, but for the information which they have obtained from the Scriptures. From these they derived the doctrine of a millennium; and they have received it as they

have done every thing else, only to corrupt it: for, exploding all the means by which the Scriptures have taught us to expect the completion of this event, they rely merely on the resources of reason and philosophy. They impiously deck themselves with the spoils of Revelation, and take occasion, from the hopes and prospects which she alone supplies, to deride her assistance, and to idolize the powers of human nature. That Being, who planted christianity by miraculous interposition, and by the effusion of his Spirit produced such effects in the hearts of millions, as afford a specimen and a pledge of an entire renovation, has also assured us, that violence and injustice shall cease, and that *none shall hurt or destroy in all his holy mountain, because the earth shall be full of the knowledge of God.* But, it seems, Revelation is to have no concern in this work; philosophy is to effect every thing; and we are to look to the Political Justice of Godwin and the Moral Code of Volney, for that which christians were so weak as to expect at the hand of Deity.

The conclusion which our author draws from the insufficiency of mere human agency to effect that great renovation in the character and condition of men, which revelation teaches us to expect, is most just and consolatory. We should have been happy to transcribe the passage; but lest we should exceed our limits, we refer our readers to Vol. II. pp. 87, 88. [Pp. 244—247, *Seventh Edition.*]

The last Essay in these volumes attempts to assign *some of the causes that have rendered evangelical religion less acceptable to persons of cultivated taste.* This essay is the most elaborate. Aware of the delicacy and difficulty of his subject, the author seems to have summoned all the powers of his mind, to enable him to grasp it in all its extent, and to present it in all its force and beauty. This essay is itself sufficient, in our opinion, to procure the author a brilliant and lasting reputation.

It is proper to remind our readers, that, in tracing the causes which have tended to produce in men of taste an aversion to evangelical religion, Mr. F. avowedly confines himself to those which are of a *subordinate* class, while he fully admits the *primary cause* to be that *inherent corruption* of nature, which renders men strongly indisposed to any communication from heaven. We could, however, have wished that he had insisted on this more largely. The Scriptures ascribe the rejection of the gospel to one general principle: *the natural man receiveth not the things of God, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.* The peculiar doctrines of christianity are distinguished by a spirit irreconcilably at variance with that of the world. The deep repentance it enjoins strikes at the pride and levity of the human heart. The mystery of an incarnate and crucified Saviour must necessarily confound the reason, and shock the prejudices, of a mind which will admit nothing

that it cannot perfectly reduce to the principles of philosophy. The whole tenour of the life of Christ, the objects he pursued, and the profound humiliation he exhibited, must convict of madness and folly the favourite pursuits of mankind. The virtues usually practised in society, and the models of excellence most admired there, are so remote from that holiness which is enjoined in the New Testament, that it is impossible for a taste which is formed on the one, to perceive the charms of the other. The happiness which it proposes in an union with God, and a participation of the image of Christ, is so far from being congenial to the inclinations of worldly men, that it can scarcely be mentioned without exciting their ridicule and scorn. General speculations on the Deity have much to amuse the mind, and to gratify that appetite for the wonderful, which thoughtful and speculative men are delighted to indulge. Religion, viewed in this light, appears more in the form of an exercise to the understanding, than a law to the heart. Here the soul expatiates at large, without feeling itself controlled or alarmed. But when evangelical truths are presented, they bring God so near, if we may be allowed the expression, and speak with so commanding a voice to the conscience, that they leave no alternative, but that of submissive acquiescence, or proud revolt. As men of taste are, for the most part, men of the world, not at all distinguished from others by a greater familiarity with religious ideas, these

observations are applicable to them in their utmost extent.

Though we thought it right to suggest these hints, we wish not to be understood to convey any censure on Mr. F. for confining his attention principally to other topics. In discussing more fully and profoundly some of the subordinate causes, which have come in aid of the primary one, to render men of cultivated taste averse to evangelical piety, we think he has rendered an important service to the public.

The first cause he assigns is, that of its being the religion of many weak and uncultivated minds; in consequence of which it becomes inseparably associated, in the conceptions of many, with the intellectual poverty of its disciples, so as to wear a mean and degraded aspect. We regret that we cannot follow the author in his illustration of this topic. We must be content with observing, that he has exposed the weakness of this prejudice in a most masterly and triumphant manner.

The second cause which the author assigns as having had, in his opinion, a considerable influence in prejudicing elegant and cultivated minds against evangelical piety, is the peculiarity of language adopted in the discourses and books of its teachers, the want of a more classical form of diction, and the profusion of words and phrases which are of a technical and systematical cast.

We are inclined to think, with Mr. F., that the cause of religion has suffered considerably from

the circumstance here mentioned. The superabundance of phrases appropriated by some pious authors to the subject of religion, and never applied to any other purpose, has not only the effect of disgusting persons of taste, but of obscuring religion itself. As they are seldom defined, and never exchanged for equivalent words, they pass current without being understood. They are not the vehicle,—they are the substitute of thought. Among a certain description of christians, they become, by degrees, regarded with a mystic awe, insomuch that if a writer expressed the very same ideas in different phrases, he would be condemned as a heretic. To quit the magical circle of words, in which many christians suffer themselves to be confined, excites as great a clamour as the boldest innovation in sentiment. Controversies, which have been agitated with much warmth, might often have been amicably adjusted, or even finally decided, could the respective partisans have been prevailed upon to lay aside their predilection for phrases, and honestly resolve to examine their real import. In defiance of the dictates of candour and good sense, these have been obstinately retained, and have usually been the refuge of ignorance, the apple of discord, and the watch-words of religious hostility. In some instances, the evil which we lament has sprung from a more amiable cause. The force and solemnity of devotional feelings are such, that they seem to consecrate every thing with which they have

been connected; and as the bulk of pious people have received their religious impressions from teachers more distinguished for their simplicity and zeal, than for comprehension of mind and copiousness of language, they learn to annex an idea of sanctity to that set of phrases with which they have been most familiar. These become the current language of religion, to which subsequent writers conform, partly, perhaps, from indolence, and partly from the fear of offending their brethren.

To these causes we may add the contentious and sectarian spirit of modern times, which has taught the different parties of christians to look on one another with an unnatural horror, to apprehend contamination from the very phrases employed by each other, and to invent each for itself a dialect as narrow and exclusive as their whimsical singularities. But while we concur, in the main, with Mr. F. on this subject, we are disposed to think that he has carried his representations too far, both with respect to the magnitude of the abuse itself, and the probable advantages which would ensue on its removal. The repugnance of the human mind, in its unenlightened state, to the peculiarities of the christian doctrine, is such, that we have little hope of its yielding to the voice of the charmer, charm he ever so wisely, Till it is touched and humbled by grace, we are apprehensive that it will retain its aversion, and not suffer itself to be cheated into an approbation of the gospel by any artifice of words. Exhibit

evangelical religion in what colours you will, the worldly-minded and the careless will shrink from the obtrusion of unwelcome ideas. Cowper has become, in spite of his religion, a popular poet, but his success has not been such as to make religion popular; nor have the gigantic genius and fame of Milton shielded from the ridicule and contempt of his admirers, that system of religion which he beheld with awful adoration.

In treating subjects properly theological, we apprehend great caution should be used not to deviate wantonly and unnecessarily from the phraseology of scripture. The apostle tells us, that in preaching the gospel he did not use the enticing words of man's wisdom, but such words as the Holy Ghost taught him. We do not, indeed, contend, that in the choice of every particular word or phrase he was immediately inspired; but we think it reasonable to believe that the unction which was on his heart, and the perfect illumination that he possessed, led him to employ such terms in the statement of the mysteries of christianity, as were better adapted than any others to convey their real import, which we are the more inclined to conclude, from observing the sameness of phraseology which pervades the writings of the apostles, when they are treating on the same subject. As the truths which the revelation of the New Testament unfolds are perfectly original, and transcendantly important, it might naturally be expected that the communication of them would

give birth to an original cast of phraseology, or, in other words, a steady adherence to certain terms, in order to render the ideas which they convey fixed, precise, and unchangeable.

In teaching the principles of every science, it is found necessary to select or invent terms, which, though originally of a laxer signification, are afterwards restricted and confined *to one peculiar modification of thought,* and constitute the technical language of that science. Such terms are always capable of being defined (for mere words convey nothing to the mind); but to substitute a definition in their place would be tedious circumlocution, and to exchange the term itself for a different one, would frequently lead to dangerous mistakes.

In the original elementary parts of a language, there are, in truth, few or no synonymes; for what should prompt men, in the early period of literature, to invent a word, that neither conveyed any new idea, nor enabled them to present an old one with more force and precision? In the progress of refinement, indeed, regard to copiousness and harmony has enriched language with many exotics, which are merely those words in a foreign language that perfectly correspond to terms in our own; as *felicity* for *happiness, celestial* for *heavenly,* and a multitude of others. Since, then, the nature of language is such, that no two terms are exactly of the same force and import, (except in the case last mentioned,) we cannot but apprehend that dangerous consequences would

result from a studied attempt to vary from the standard phraseology, where the statement of doctrines is concerned, and that, by changing the terms, the ideas themselves might be changed or mutilated. In teaching a religion designed for the use and benefit of all mankind, it is certainly desirable that the technical words, the words employed in a peculiar and appropriate sense, should be few; but to fix and perpetuate the ideas, and to preserve *the faith once delivered to the saints* from the caprices of fancy, and the dangers of innovation, it seems necessary that there should be some. We are inclined to think that in inculcating christian morality, and in appeals and addresses to the heart, a much greater latitude may be safely indulged, than in the statement of *peculiar doctrines;* and that a more bold and varied diction, with a wider range of illustration and allusion than is usually employed, would often be attended with the happiest effect. Mr. Foster has given, in many parts of these volumes, beautiful specimens of what we intend.

With respect to the copious use of scripture language, which Mr. F. condemns, (in our opinion with too much severity,) as giving an uncouth and barbarous air to theological books, we prefer a middle course; without applauding the excess to which it is carried by many pious writers, on the one hand; or wishing it to be kept so entirely apart as Mr. F. contends for, on the other. To say nothing of the inimitable beauties of the Bible,

considered in a literary view, which are universally acknowledged, it is the book which every devout man is accustomed to consult as the oracle of God; it is the companion of his best moments, and the vehicle of his strongest consolations. Intimately associated in his mind with every thing dear and valuable, its diction more powerfully excites devotional feelings than any other; and when temperately and soberly used, imparts an unction to a religious discourse, which nothing else can supply. Besides, is there not room to apprehend, that a studied avoidance of the scripture phraseology, and a care to express all that it is supposed to contain in the forms of classical diction, might ultimately lead to a neglect of the Scriptures themselves, and a habit of substituting flashy and superficial declamation, in the room of the saving truths of the gospel? Such an apprehension is but too much verified by the most celebrated sermons of the French; and still more by some modern compositions in our own language, which usurp that title. For devotional impression, we conceive that a very considerable tincture of the language of the scriptures, or at least such a colouring as shall discover an intimate acquaintance with those inimitable models, will generally succeed best.

It is impossible to establish an universal rule, since different methods are equally adapted to different purposes; and, therefore, we are willing to allow with Mr. F. that, where the fashionable and the gay are addressed, and the prejudices

arising from a false refinement are to be conciliated, whatever in the diction might repel by an appearance of singularity, should be carefully shunned. Accordingly, we equally admire, in *The Rise and Progress of Religion*, by Dr. Doddridge, and in *The Rural Philosophy* of Mr. Bates, the dexterity with which these excellent writers have suited their composition to their respective classes of readers. On the whole, let it once for all be remembered, that men of taste form a very small part of the community, of no greater consequence in the eyes of their Creator than others; that the end of all religious discourse is the salvation of souls; and that to a mind which justly estimates the weight of eternal things, it will appear a greater honour to have converted a sinner from the error of his way, than to have wielded the thunder of a Demosthenes, or to have kindled the flame of a Cicero.

We hasten to close this article, by making a few observations on the last cause which our author has assigned, for the general distaste that persons of polite and elegant attainments usually discover toward evangelical religion. This is, the neglect and contempt with which it has been almost constantly treated by our fine writers; of whose delinquency, in this respect, the author takes a wide and extensive survey, exposing their criminality with a force of eloquence that has perhaps never before been exerted on this subject. Though his attention is chiefly directed to the influence

of modern literature, yet, as the writings of the ancients, and especially of the poets, have had a powerful operation in forming the taste and sentiments of succeeding generations, he has extended his notice to these, and has made some most striking animadversions on the ancient authors of the epopœia, and particularly on Homer.

We must do justice to his intrepidity in venturing to attack the idol of all classical scholars: nor can he have failed to foresee the manner in which it will be attempted to be repelled. They will remind him, that the lawfulness of defensive war has seldom been called in question; that the one in which Homer's heroes were engaged, was not only just, but meritorious, being undertaken to avenge a most signal affront and injury; that no subject could be more suited to the epic muse, either on account of its magnitude, or the deep interest it excited; that having chosen it, the poet is to be commended for throwing into it all the fire of which it was susceptible; that to cherish in the breasts of youth a gallant and warlike spirit, is the surest defence of nations; and that this spirit, under proper regulations, constitutes that θυμοειδης which Plato extols so highly in his Republic, as the basis of a manly, heroic character. This, and much more than this, will be said: but when our Grecians have spent all their arrows, it will still remain an incontestable fact, that an enthusiastic admiration of the Iliad of Homer is but a bad preparation for relishing the beauties of

the New Testament. What then is to be done? Shall we abandon the classics, and devote ourselves solely to the perusal of modern writers, where the maxims inculcated, and the principles taught, are little, if at all, more in unison with those of christianity?—a fact, which Mr. F. acknowledges and deplores. While things continue as they are, we are apprehensive, therefore, that we should gain nothing by neglecting the unrivalled productions of genius left us by the ancients, but a deterioration of taste, without any improvement in religion. The evil is not to be corrected by any partial innovation of this kind. Until a more christian spirit pervades the world, we are inclined to think that the study of the classics is, on the whole, advantageous to public morals, by inspiring an elegance of sentiment, and an elevation of soul, which we should in vain seek for elsewhere.

The total inattention of the great majority of our fine writers, to all the distinguishing features of the religion they profess, affords a most melancholy reflection. It has no doubt excited the notice of many, and has been deeply lamented; but it has never been placed in a light so serious and affecting as in the volumes before us. In the observations which our author makes on the Essay on Man, we are delighted and surprised to find at once so much philosophical truth and poetical beauty. His critique on the writings of Addison and Johnson, evinces deep penetration;

and, as it respects the former, is uncommonly impressive and important.

We take our leave of this work with sincere reluctance. For the length to which we have extended our review, the subject must be our apology. It has fared with us, as with a traveller who passes through an enchanting country, where he meets with so many beautiful views and so many striking objects which he is loath to quit, that he loiters till the shades of the evening insensibly fall upon him. We are far, however, from recommending these volumes as faultless. Mr. F.'s work is rather an example of the power of genius, than a specimen of finished composition: it lies open in many points to the censure of those minor critics, who, by the observation of a few technical rules, may easily avoid its faults, without reaching one of its beauties. The author has paid too little attention to the construction of his sentences. They are for the most part too long, sometimes involved in perplexity, and often loaded with redundances. They have too much of the looseness of an harangue, and too little of the compact elegance of regular composition. An occasional obscurity pervades some parts of the work. The mind of the writer seems at times to struggle with conceptions too mighty for his grasp, and to present confused masses, rather than distinct delineations of thought. This, however, is to be imputed to the originality, not the weakness, of his powers. The scale on which he thinks

is so vast, and the excursions of his imagination are so extended, that they frequently carry him into the most unbeaten track, and among objects where a ray of light glances in an angle only without diffusing itself over the whole. On ordinary topics, his conceptions are luminous in the highest degree. He places the idea which he wishes to present in such a flood of light, that it is not merely visible itself, but it seems to illumine all around it. He paints metaphysics, and has the happy art of arraying what in other hands would appear cold and comfortless abstractions, in the warmest colours of fancy. Without the least affectation of frivolous ornaments, without quitting his argument in pursuit of imagery, his imagination becomes the perfect handmaid of his reason, ready at every moment to spread her canvass, and present her pencil. But what pleases us most, and affords us the highest satisfaction, is to find such talents enlisted on the side of true christianity; nor can we help indulging a benevolent triumph at the accession of powers to the cause of evangelical piety, which its most distinguished opponents would be proud to possess.

REVIEW

OF

CUSTANCE ON THE CONSTITUTION.

A concise View of the Constitution of England. By GEORGE CUSTANCE. *Dedicated, by permission, to William Wilberforce, Esq. M. P. for the County of York.* 12mo. pp. 474. Price 6*s.* bds. Kidderminster: Gower. London: Longman & Co. Hatchard. 1808.

IT were surely to be wished, that every man had a competent acquaintance with the laws and constitution of the country to which he belongs. Patriotism is a blind and irrational impulse, unless it is founded on a knowledge of the blessings we are called to secure, and the privileges we propose to defend. In a tyrannical state, it is natural for the ruling power to cherish political ignorance, which can alone reconcile men to the tame surrender of their natural rights. The diffusion of light and knowledge is very unfavourable to ill-founded pretensions of every sort, but to none more than the encroachments of arbitrary power and lawless violence. The more we explore the recesses of a dungeon, the less likely are we to be reconciled to take up our residence in it. But the

venerable fabric of the British constitution, our hereditary mansion, whether it be tried by the criterion of convenience or of beauty, of ancient prescription or of practical utility, will bear the most rigid examination; and the more it is contemplated, will be the more admired.

The Romans were so conscious of the importance of imparting to the rising generation an early knowledge of their laws and constitution, that the contents of the twelve tables were committed to memory, and formed one of the first elements of public instruction. They were sensible that what lays hold of the mind at so early a period, is not only likely to be long remembered, but is almost sure to command veneration and respect. We are not aware that similar attempts have been made to render the British youth acquainted with the principles of our admirable constitution, not inferior surely to that of the Roman republic; a defect in the system of education, which the circumstances of the present crisis loudly call upon us to supply. When our existence as an independent nation is threatened, when unexampled sacrifices must be made, and, perhaps, the utmost efforts of patience and of persevering courage exerted for our preservation, an attachment to that constitution which is the basis of all our prosperity, cannot be too zealously promoted or too deeply felt. It is a just and enlightened estimate of the invaluable blessings that constitution secures, which alone can make us sustain our present burdens without repining,

as well as prepare us for greater privations and severer struggles. For this reason we cannot but look upon the performance before us as a most seasonable publication. One cause of the attention of youth being so little directed to our national laws and constitution, in schools, is probably the want of suitable books. We have an abundance of learned and able writers on these subjects; but few, if any, that are quite adapted to the purpose we are now speaking of. Millar's is a very profound and original work; but it supposes a great deal of previous knowledge, without which it can be scarcely understood, and is in every view better adapted to aid the researches of an antiquary, or the speculations of a philosopher, than to answer the end of an elementary treatise. De Lolme's performance may be deemed more suitable; yet, able and ingenious as it is, it labours under some essential deficiencies, considered in the light of an elementary work. There is in it a spirit of refined speculation, an eagerness to detect and display latent, unthought-of excellencies, in the frame of government, which is very remote from the simplicity requisite in the lessons of youth. Of Blackstone's Commentaries it would be presumptuous in us to attempt an eulogium, after Sir William Jones has pronounced it to be the *most beautiful outline* that was ever given of any science. Nothing can exceed the luminous arrangement, the vast comprehension, and, we may venture to add from the best authorities, the legal accuracy of

this wonderful performance, which, in style and composition, is distinguished by an unaffected grace, a majestic simplicity, which can only be eclipsed by the splendour of its higher qualities. Admirable, however, as these commentaries are, it is obvious that they are much too voluminous and elaborate, to answer the purpose of an introduction to the study of the English constitution. We do, therefore, most sincerely congratulate the public on the appearance of a work, which we can safely recommend, as well fitted to supply a chasm in our system of public instruction. The book before us is, in every view, well adapted for the instruction of youth: the clear and accurate information it conveys upon a most important subject, and the truly christian tincture of its maxims and principles, are well calculated to enlarge the understanding and improve the heart. We beg leave particularly to recommend it to the attention of schools, in which, we conceive, a general acquaintance with the laws and constitution of the country might be cultivated with much advantage, as forming a proper preparation for the active scenes of life. Legal provisions for the security of the best temporal interests of mankind, are the result of so much collective wisdom and experience, and are so continually conversant with human affairs, that we know no study more adapted to invigorate the understanding, and at the same time to give a practical turn to its speculations. The close cohesion of its parts tends

to make the mind severely argumentative, while its continual relation to the state of society and its successive revolutions, fences it in on the side of metaphysical abstraction and useless theories. What we look upon (for the reasons already mentioned) to be a most useful and interesting study at all times, we would earnestly recommend as an indispensable duty at the present crisis.

Of the merits of the work before us, the public may form some judgement, when we inform them that it contains whatever is most interesting to the general reader in Blackstone, together with much useful information derived from Professor Christian, De Lolme, and various other eminent authors. Some will be ready to accuse the writer of having carried his partiality toward whatever is established too far; nor dare we say the charge is entirely unfounded. We are not disposed, however, to be severe upon him on this account. We wish to see the minds of our youth preoccupied with a strong bias in favour of our national institutions. We would wish to see them animated by a warm and generous enthusiasm, and to defer the business of detecting faults, and exposing imperfections, to a future period. Let us only be allowed to remark, that this policy should be temperately employed: lest the mind should suffer a revulsion, and pass, perhaps rather abruptly, from implicit admiration to the contrary extreme; lest, indignant at having been misled, it substitute general censure for undistinguishing applause.

We wish our author had, in common with Blackstone, expressed his disapprobation of the severity of our criminal code. The multiplicity of capital punishments we shall always consider as a reproach to the English nation; though, numerous as they are, they bear no proportion to what they would be, were the law permitted to take its course. The offences deemed capital by the common law are few; the sanguinary complexion of the criminal law, as it now stands, has arisen from the injudicious tampering of the legislature. To us it appears evident, that the *certainty* of punishment will restrain offenders more than its severity; and that, when men are tempted to transgress, they do not weigh the emolument they had in view against the penalty awarded by law, but simply the probability of detection and punishment against that of impunity. Let the punishments be moderate, and this will be the most effectual means of rendering them certain. While nothing can exceed the trial by jury, and the dignified impartiality with which justice is administered, we are compelled to look upon the criminal code with very different emotions, and earnestly to wish it were carefully revised, and made more humane, simple, and precise.

As little can we concur with the author before us, in the defence he sets up of the donation of pensions and sinecures, where there are no pretensions of personal merit or honourable services. Standing quite aloof from party politics, we must

affirm, that to whatever extent such a practice exists, exactly in the same proportion is it a source of public calamity and disgrace. To look at it, as our author does, only in a pecuniary view, is to neglect the principal consideration. It is not merely or chiefly as a waste of public money, that the granting of sinecures and pensions to the undeserving ought to be condemned; the venality and corruption it indicates and produces is its worst feature, and an infallible symptom of a declining state. With these exceptions, we have accompanied the author with almost uninterrupted pleasure, and have been highly gratified with the good sense, the extensive information, and the unaffected piety he displays throughout the work. Though a firm and steady churchman himself, he manifests a truly christian spirit toward the protestant dissenters; and is so far from looking with an evil eye on the large toleration they enjoy, that he contemplates with evident satisfaction the laws on which that toleration is founded.

Of the style of this work, it is but justice to say, that, without aspiring to any high degree of ornament, it is pure, perspicuous, and correct, well suited to the subject on which it is employed.

As a fair specimen of Mr. C.'s manner of thinking, we beg leave to lay before our readers the following just and appropriate remarks on *duelling*:—

"Deliberate duelling falls under the head of "*express malice*; and the law of England has

" justly fixed the crime and punishment of murder " upon both the principal and accessaries of this " most unchristian practice. Nothing more is " necessary with us, to check this daring violation " of all law, than the same firmness and integrity " in the trial of duellists which so eminently distin- " guish an English jury on all other occasions.

" Perhaps it will be asked, what are *men of* " *honour* to do, if they must not appeal to the " pistol and the sword? The answer is obvious: if " one *gentleman* has offended another, he cannot " give a more indisputable proof of genuine courage, " than by making a frank acknowledgement of " his fault, and asking forgiveness of the injured " party. On the other hand, if he have received " an affront, he ought freely to forgive, as he " hopes to be forgiven of God. And if either " of the parties aggravate the matter by sending " a challenge to fight, the other must not be a " partaker of sin, if he would obey God rather " than man.

" Still it will be said, that a *military* or *naval* " man, at least, must not decline a challenge, if " he would maintain the character of a man of " courage. But is it not insulting the loyalty and " good sense of the brave defenders of our laws, " to imagine that they of all men must violate " them to preserve their honour; since the king " has expressly forbidden any military man to send " a challenge to fight a duel, upon pain of being " cashiered, if an officer; and of suffering corporal

" punishment, if a non-commissioned officer, or " private soldier? Nor ought any officer or soldier " to upbraid another for refusing a challenge, " whom his Majesty positively declares *he* considers " as having only acted in obedience to his royal " orders; and fully acquits of any disgrace that " may be attached to his conduct.* Besides, what " necessary connexion is there between the fool- " hardiness of one who risks the eternal perdition " of his neighbour and of himself in an unlawful " combat, and the patriotic bravery of him who, " when *duty* calls, boldly engages the enemy of " his king and country? None will dispute the " courage of the excellent Colonel Gardiner, who " was slain at the battle of Preston Pans, in the " rebellion in 1745. Yet he once refused a chal- " lenge, with this dignified remark: 'I fear " sinning, though I do not fear fighting.'† The " fact is, that fighting a duel is so far from being " a proof of a man's possessing *true* courage, " that it is an infallible mark of his *cowardice*. " For he is influenced by 'the fear of man,' whose " praise he loveth more than the praise of God."

* "See Articles of War, sec. 7."

† "See Doddridge's Life of Colonel Gardiner, an interesting "piece of Biography, worthy the perusal of every officer in the "army and navy."

REVIEW

OF

ZEAL WITHOUT INNOVATION.

PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION.

It was the opinion of some sincere friends of religion, that a republication of the following strictures might have its use in certain quarters, where the literary journal in which they first appeared may possibly not have extended. The writer of these remarks has nothing in view but the promotion of christian charity, the vindication of calumniated innocence, and the counteraction of those insidious arts by which designing men are seeking to advance their personal interest, or those of a party, at the expense of truth and justice. How far the author here animadverted upon falls under this description, must be left to the decision of an impartial public. If it be thought that more commendation ought to have been given in the following strictures to those parts of the work which are confessedly unexceptionable, the writer must be allowed to remark, that the effect of what is good in the performance is entirely defeated by the large infusion of what is of an opposite quality. In appreciating the merits of a writer, the general tendency of his work should be

principally regarded, without suffering the edge of censure to be abated by such a mixture of truth as only serves to give a safer and wider circulation to misrepresentation and falsehood.

It has been deemed a capital omission in the following critique, that no notice is taken of the author's illiberal treatment of the puritans. This omission arose partly from a wish to avoid prolixity, and partly from an apprehension it would lead to a discussion not perfectly relevant to the matter in hand. It would be no difficult matter to construct such a defence of the puritans as would leave this or any other author very little to reply; but to do justice to the subject would require a deduction of facts, and a series of arguments, quite inconsistent with the limits to which we are confined. To oppose assertion to assertion, and invective to invective, could answer no end but the reviving animosities which we should be happy to see for ever extinguished. The controversy betwixt the puritans and their opponents turns entirely on these two questions :—Has any religious society, assuming the name of a church, a right to establish new terms of communion, distinct from those enjoined by Christ and his apostles? Admitting they have such a right, ought these terms to consist in things which the imposers acknowledge to be indifferent, and the party on whom they are enjoined look upon as sinful? Is not this a palpable violation of the apostolical injunction, "Him that is weak in the faith, receive

ye, but not to doubtful disputations?" We are persuaded we speak the sentiments of some of the best men in the church of England, when we assert that the basis of communion was made narrower at the reformation than is consistent with the dictates of christian charity or sound policy, and that the puritans were treated with a severity altogether unjustifiable. The author of Zeal without Innovation declares himself dissatisfied with the trite remark that there were faults on both sides, when the guilt of aggression rests so clearly on the heads of the nonconformists." To infer their guilt as aggressors, because they were the first to complain, is begging the question at issue. Before we are entitled to criminate them on this head, it is requisite to inquire into the *justice* of their complaints. They who first discover a truth, are naturally the first to impugn the opposite error. They who find themselves aggrieved are necessarily the first to complain. So that to attach culpability to the party which betrays the first symptoms of dissatisfaction, without farther inquiry, is to confer on speculative error, and on practical tyranny, a claim to unalterable perpetuity—a doctrine well suited to the mean and slavish maxims inculcated by this writer. The learned Warburton was as little satisfied as himself with the trite remark of there being faults on both sides, but for an opposite reason. "It would be hard," he affirms, "to say who are most to blame; those who oppose established authority

for things indifferent; or that authority which rigidly insists on them, and will abate nothing for the sake of tender, misinformed consciences: I say it would be hard to solve this, had not the apostle done it for us, where he says, 'We that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and *not to please ourselves.*' 'I myself,' says he, 'do so, and all for the gospel's sake.' This is t' man who tells us he had fought a good fight and overcome. And we may believe him; for, in this contention, he is always the conqueror who submits."

When the question is fairly put, whether a tender conscience, admitting it to be erroneous, shall be forced, or the imposition of things confessedly indifferent be dropped, it can surely require but little sagacity to return a decisive answer. The arguments which induced Locke to give his suffrage in favour of the nonconformists, the reasons which prevailed on Baxter and on Howe to quit stations of usefulness in the church, and doom themselves to an unprofitable inactivity, will not easily be deemed light or frivolous. The English nation has produced no men more exempt from the suspicion of weakness or caprice than these.

Desirous of composing, rather than inflaming, the dissensions which unhappily subsist among christians, we decline entering farther on this topic, heartily praying, with the apostle, that "grace may be with *all* them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity."

REVIEW.

Zeal without Innovation: or, the Present State of Religion and Morals considered, with a View to the Dispositions and Measures required for its Improvement. To which is subjoined, an Address to young Clergymen, intended to guard them against some prevalent Errors. 1808.

THERE are some works which require to be viewed only in a literary light. No important principles are discussed, nor any momentous interests at stake. When this is the case, nothing more is necessary than for a reviewer to exhibit the author's plan, and to give an impartial judgement on the ability with which it is executed. If the merit of the performance be very conspicuous, it is the less necessary to multiply words in order to shew it; and if it have little or none, it need not be conducted to the land of forgetfulness with the pomp of criticism. For this reason, the utility of periodical criticism may, in a literary view, be fairly questioned; as it seems like an attempt to anticipate the decision of the public, and prematurely to adjust those pretensions, which, if left to itself, it will be sure to adjust, in time, with the most perfect impartiality. A reviewer may give a momentary popularity to what deserves to be forgotten, but he can neither withhold nor bestow a lasting fame. Cowper, we will venture to say,

is not the less admired because the Critical Review, with its usual good taste and discernment, could discover in him no traces of poetic genius.

There are other works, which owe their importance more to the subjects on which they treat, and their tendency to inflame the prejudices, and strike in with the humour, of the public, than to any extraordinary ability. Their infection renders them formidable. They are calculated to increase the violence of an epidemic disease. The matter of contagion ought not to be slighted on account of the meanness of the vehicle by which it is transmitted. We are sorry to be under the necessity of classing the performance before us with works of that nature; but our conviction of its deserving that character must be our apology for bestowing a degree of attention upon it, to which it is not otherwise entitled. The author's professed design is to present a view of the state of religion and morals, and to suggest such remedies as are best adapted to correct the disorder under which they languish. A more noble and important undertaking cannot be conceived. We have only to lament that, in the pursuit of it, he betrays so many mean partialities and ungenerous prejudices, as utterly disqualify him from doing justice to the subject. While we would wish to give him credit for *some* portion of good intention, we are firmly convinced, that had *his eye been single, his whole body had been* more *full of light.* In an attempt to trace the causes of

degeneracy in religion and morals, and to point out the proper correctives, nothing is more requisite than a large and catholic spirit, totally emancipated from the shackles of party, joined with extensive knowledge and a discriminating judgement. In the first of these qualities the author is lamentably deficient. He looks at every thing so entirely through the medium of party, that, though he cannot be said to be absolutely blind, he is quite incapable of seeing afar off. His remarks are often shrewd; such as indicate a mind awake and attentive to the scenes which have passed before him. He is sometimes acute, never comprehensive; accurate in details, with little capacity for tracing the consequences and unfolding the energy of general principles. While the title of the work leads us to expect his attention would be entirely directed to the best means of promoting the moral improvement of mankind, the watchful reader will perceive there are *subordinate objects* which he is at least equally solicitous to advance. There is a complication in his views, *a wheel within a wheel,* quite incompatible with simplicity of mind, and perfect purity of intention. There appears too much reason to regard him as an artful, bigoted partizan, acting under the disguise of a philanthropist and a reformer. Severe as this censure may seem, we are persuaded our readers will acknowledge its justice, when they are apprised of the leading statements and positions contained in this singular work.

The author sets out with descanting on the state of religion in this country, which he represents as very deplorable: in proof of this, he adduces, among other facts, the violation of the christian sabbath, and the prevailing neglect of public worship. As these symptoms of degeneracy are not found in an equal degree among dissenters and methodists, he is led, by the course of his subject, to notice the state of religion amongst them, where he acknowledges there is no room to complain of a deficiency of zeal. He does not affect to deny that their teachers exhibit the great truths of christianity with energy and effect, and that much good has resulted from their labours. We should naturally suppose a pious man would here find ground for satisfaction, and that, however he might regret the mixture of error with useful efforts, he would rejoice to perceive that real and important good was done anywhere. It is but justice to him to let him convey his feelings on this subject in his own words.

"From the sad state of things represented in "the preceding section many turn with pleasure "to what is passing among our separatists, whose "places of worship generally exhibit a very dif- "ferent scene to our parish churches. Here there "appears to be some life and effect. The offi- "ciating minister has not half-empty pews to "harangue, but a crowded auditory 'hanging on "his lips.' Whether, however, in what is now "before us, we shall find no cause of uneasiness,

" when all its circumstances are considered, admits " of great doubt.

" It cannot be denied, that, with all the fanati- " cism charged on separatists, (and it is to be feared " with great truth in some instances,) many a " profligate has been reclaimed, and much good " in other ways has been done among the lower " orders, by the labours of their ministers. From " these circumstances, and the known ignorance " and dissoluteness of the times, many, without " the least degree of adverse intention to our " established church, have, in the simplicity of " their hearts, concurred in forwarding the endea- " vours of the separatists. And hence it is, that, " in all the more populous parts of the country, " we see that multitude of dissenting chapels, which " of late years has increased, and is still increasing.

" To some good men, free from all prejudice " against the church of England, it is matter of " no regret that the number of separatists increases, " provided there be, with this circumstance, an " increasing regard to christianity. With such " persons, all consideration of forms, and modes " of worship, is sunk in the greater importance " of genuine faith and piety. But it enters not " in the thoughts of such persons, that 'tares " may spring up with the wheat,' and that what " at present has a good effect, may operate to " the production of something hereafter of a very " different nature. Now such we conceive to be " the nature of the case before us. We have

"reason to apprehend ill consequences from in-
"creasing separatism, with whatever zeal for im-
"portant truths, and with whatever success in
"propagating them, it be at present accompanied.

"And first, it may be observed that it goes to
"the annihilation of the established church as a
"national institution. The bulk of every newly-
"raised congregation of separatists is composed of
"persons educated within the pale of the church of
"England. Of these, many are heads of families, or
"likely to become so. By commencing dissenters,
"they, and their posterity, however multiplied,
"are broken off from the national church. These
"detachments from the establishment, going on
"as they have done of late years, must, conse-
"quently, increase the number of those who prefer
"a differently constituted church; and these may
"in time amount to such a majority, as to render
"it again a question with those in power, whether
"the church of England shall any longer have
"the support of the state."—Pp. 14—17.

That the increase of dissenters, *in itself considered,* cannot be a pleasing circumstance to a conscientious churchman, is certain; and if this is all the author means to say, he talks very idly. The true question evidently is, whether the good accruing from the labours of dissenters is a proper subject of congratulation, *although* it may be attended with this incidental consequence, an increased separation from the established church. In a word, is the promotion of genuine christianity,

or the advancement of an external communion, the object primarily to be pursued? Whatever excellence may be ascribed to our national establishment by its warmest admirers, still it is a human institution—an institution to which the first ages of the church were strangers, to which christianity was in no degree indebted for its original success, and the merit of which must be brought to the test of utility. It is in the order of means. As an expedient devised by the wisdom of our ancestors for promoting true religion, it is entitled to support just as far as it accomplishes its end. This end, however, is found, in some instances, to be accomplished by means which are of a different description. A fire, which threatens immediate destruction, is happily extinguished before it has had time to extend its ravages; but it is extinguished by persons who have volunteered their services, without waiting for the engineers, who act under the direction of the police. Here is *zeal*, but, unfortunately, accompanied with *innovation*, at which our author is greatly chagrined. How closely has he copied the example of St. Paul, who rejoiced that Christ was preached, though from envy and contention! With him, the promulgation of divine truth was an object so much at heart, that he was glad to see it accomplished, even from the most criminal motives, and by the most unworthy instruments. With our author, the dissemination of the same truth, by some of the best of men, and from the purest motives,

is matter of lamentation and regret. It requires little attention to perceive he has been taught in a different school from the apostle, and studied under a different master.

The eternal interests of mankind are either mere chimæras, or they are matters of infinite importance; compared with which, the success of any party, the increase of any external communion whatever, is mere dust in the balance: and for this plain reason, that the promotion of these interests is the very end of christianity itself. However divided good men may have been with respect to the propriety of legislative interference in the affairs of religion, the arguments by which they have supported their respective opinions have been uniformly drawn from the supposed tendency of such interference, or the contrary, to advance the moral improvement of mankind; and, supposing this to be ascertained, the superior merit of the system to which that tendency belongs was considered as decided. Viewed in this light, the problem is extensive, affording scope for much investigation; while the authority of religion remains unimpaired, and the disputants on each side are left at liberty to indulge the most enlarged sentiments of candour towards each other. Such were the principles on which Hooker and the ablest of his successors rested their defence of the established church. The high church party, of which Mr. Daubeny may be looked upon as the present leader, have taken different grounds. Their system is neither more nor

less than popery, faintly disguised, and adapted to the meridian of England. The writer before us, without avowing the sentiments of Daubeny, displays nearly the same intolerance and bigotry,—under this peculiar disadvantage, that his views want the cohesion of system, his bigotry the support of principle. This formal separation of the interests of the church from those of true religion, must inevitably produce the most deplorable consequences. Will the serious and conscientious part of the public be led to form a favourable opinion of a religious community, by hearing it avowed by her champions, that men had better be suffered eternally to perish than to find salvation out of her pale? Will they not naturally ask what those *higher ends* can be, in comparison of which the eternal welfare of a large portion of our fellow-creatures is deemed a trifle? Could such a spirit be supposed generally prevalent in the clergy of the established church, it would at once lose all that is sacred in their eyes, and be looked upon as a mere combination to gain possession of power and emolument, under pretence of religion. We are mistaken if much mischief has not already accrued from the indulgence of this spirit. It has envenomed the ill qualities naturally generated by the domination of a party. It has produced serious injury to the church, by imboldening men to appear in her defence who bring nothing into the controversy but overweening pride, ceremonial hypocrisy, and priestly insolence. Haughty, con-

temptuous airs, a visible disdain of the scruples of tender consciences, and frequently of piety itself, except under one garb and fashion, have been too generally assumed by her champions. These features have given inexpressible disgust to pious and candid minds; hurt, as they well may be, to see a religious community, however numerous or respectable, continually vaunting itself, laying exclusive claims to purity and orthodoxy, and seeming to consider it as a piece of condescension to suffer any other denomination to subsist. They cannot dismiss it from their minds, that humility is a virtue proper to a church as well as to an individual, and that ecclesiastical pride may happen to be as offensive to heaven as pride of any other kind. In the church of Rome these qualities have been ever conspicuous; but finding nothing of this sort, in an equal degree, in any other protestant communion, and recollecting that "the lofty looks of men shall be humbled, and the haughtiness of men be made low," one naturally feels some apprehension that they may not pass unpunished, though they are found in the precincts of a cathedral.

Our author derives no satisfaction from the acknowledged success of dissenters in "turning sinners from the error of their way," from an apprehension that their success may eventually prove injurious to the establishment. He pretends to foresee, from this cause, a continual transfer of hearers from the church to the conventicle. We beg leave to ask the writer, how such a consequence can ensue, but

from the superior zeal and piety of sectaries? To suppose, that with only an *equal* share of these qualities, they will be able to make successful inroads on the church, is to abandon the defence of the hierarchy altogether; since this is acknowledging a radical defect in the system, which operates as a dead weight on its exertions, and disqualifies it for maintaining its ground against rivals; that, in short, instead of being the most efficacious mode of exhibiting and impressing revealed truth, it is intrinsically weak and ineffectual. For that system must surely be acknowledged to be so, which is incapable of interesting the people, and which, by rendering public worship less attractive, produces a general preference of a different mode. To suppose this to be the case is to suppose something essentially wrong, which should be immediately examined and corrected. On this supposition the men are acquitted, the system is arraigned. As this, however, is far from being the opinion of the author, the conclusion returns with irresistible force, that a permanent increase of dissenters can *only* arise from their superior piety and zeal. Now, these are really, in our opinion, qualities too valuable to be dispensed with, whatever interests they may obstruct. Regretting, deeply as we may, in common with our author, that they should have formed an alliance so unfortunate, we must still think it better, not only for their possessors, but for the world at large, for them to be found even here than to have no existence at all;

and it is upon this point we are at issue with this *conscientious* reformer. For our parts, we are really so old-fashioned and puritanical, that we had rather behold men awakened and converted among dissenters and methodists, than see them sleep the sleep of death in the arms of an establishment.

But our author, it seems, is filled with pious alarm for the cause of *orthodoxy*, from the increasing separation from the church. "By the sound doc-" trine its instituted forms express, it will," he tells us, "as long as it stands, be a witness to the truth, " in periods the most barren of ministerial qualifica-" tion; a rallying point to all truly christian pastors; " and *an accredited voucher for the purity of their in-" struction.*"—P. 17. How much were the primitive christians to be pitied, who were unhappily destitute of any such "voucher;" and had nothing to secure the permanence of truth but the promised presence of Christ, the illumination of the Spirit, and the light of the Scriptures—poor substitutes, undoubtedly, for the solid basis of creeds and formularies! We should readily concur with the author in his views of the security derived from the subscription of articles, if we could forget a few stubborn facts, which we beg leave humbly to recall to his recollection. Is it not a fact, that the nature and extent of the assent and consent signified by subscription have been the subject of a very thorny controversy, in which more ill faith and chicane have been displayed than were ever before known out of the school of the Jesuits; and that the issue of this

controversy has been to establish very generally the doctrine of Paley, that none are excluded by it but quakers, papists, and baptists? Is it not a fact, that the press is teeming every week with publications of the most acrimonious description, written by professed churchmen against persons who have incurred this acrimony merely by their attachment to these articles? Is it not a fact, that the doctrines they exhibit are so scorned and detested in this country, that whoever seriously maintains them is stigmatized with the name of "Methodist?" and that that part of the clergy who preach them are *for that reason alone*, more insulted and despised by their brethren than even the dissenters themselves? It is with peculiar effrontery that this author insists on subscription to articles as a sufficient security for the purity of religious instruction, when it is the professed object of his work to recall his contemporaries to that purity. If he means that the "voucher" he speaks of answers its purpose because *it is* credited, he is plainly laughing at the simplicity of the people: if he means to assert it is *entitled* to credit, we must request him to reflect how he can vindicate himself from the charge of "speaking lies in hypocrisy."

A long course of experience has clearly demonstrated the inefficacy of creeds and confessions to perpetuate religious belief. Of this the only faithful depository is, not that which is "written with ink," but on the "fleshly tables of the heart." The spirit of error is too subtile and volatile to be

held by such chains. Whoever is acquainted with ecclesiastical history must know, that public creeds and confessions have occasioned more controversies than they have composed; and that when they ceased to be the subject of dispute they have become antiquated and obsolete. A vast majority of the dissenters of the present day hold precisely the same religious tenets which the puritans did two centuries ago, because it is the instruction they have uniformly received from their pastors; and for the same reason the articles of the national church are almost effaced from the minds of its members, because they have long been neglected or denied by the majority of those who occupy its pulpits. We have never heard of the church of Geneva altering its confession, but we know that Voltaire boasted there was not, in his time, a calvinist in the city; nor have we heard of any proposed amendment in the creed of the Scotch, yet it is certain the doctrines of that creed are preached by a rapidly decreasing minority of the Scottish clergy. From these and similar facts we may fairly conclude, that the doctrines of the church, with or without subscription, are sure to perpetuate themselves where they are faithfully preached; but that the mere circumstance of their being subscribed, will neither secure their being preached nor believed.

"Separatism," says the author, "has no *fixed or* "*perpetual character:* what it is at present, we may, "by attentive observation, be able to pronounce;

" but no human foresight can ascertain what it " will be hereafter. Though now, in its numerous " chapels, the soundest doctrine should be heard, " we have no security that they will not become " the schools of heresy. Here, if the licentious " teacher get a footing, he moulds the whole sys- " tem of ministration to his views; not a prayer, " not a psalm, not a formulary of any kind, but, " in this case, will become the vehicle of error."— Pp. 17, 18.

How far, in creatures so liable to mistake, a fixed and perpetual character is an enviable attribute, we shall not stay to inquire; with what right it is claimed on this occasion it is not very difficult to determine. The Thirty-nine Articles will unquestionably always remain the same; that is, they will always be the Thirty-nine Articles: but it is not quite so certain that they are universally believed; much less, that they will always continue to be so; and least of all, that, after having ceased to be believed, they will receive the sanction of every successive legislature. For our parts, such is our simplicity, that when we read of a fixed and perpetual character, our attention is always wandering to men, to some mode of thinking or feeling to which such perpetuity belongs; instead of resting in the useful contemplation of pen, ink, and paper. With every disposition, however, to do the author justice, we have some fear for the success of his argument; suspecting the dissenters will be ready to reply,

'Our pastors cordially embrace the doctrine contained in your articles; and as this cannot be affirmed of the majority of yours, the question of perpetuity is reduced to this amusing theorem,—In which of two given situations will a doctrine last the longest—where it is believed without being subscribed, or where it is subscribed without being believed?'

The equal justice it is our duty to maintain, obliges us to notice another aspersion which the author casts upon dissenters.

"Every addition Separatism makes to its supporters, alters the proportion existing in this country between the monarchical and the democratic spirit; either of which, preponderating to a considerable degree, might be productive of the most serious consequences. For it is certain, that, as our church-establishment is favourable to monarchy, so is the constitution of our dissenting congregations to democracy. The latter principle is cherished in all communities, where the power resides not in one, or a few, but is shared, in certain proportions, among all the members; which is the case in most of the religious societies under consideration. Let it be remembered, then, that if religion increase in this way, there is that increasing with it which is not religion; there is something springing up which is of a different nature, and which will be sure to stand, whether that better thing with which it may grow do or not."—P. 20.

In this statement the author has exhibited his usual inattention to facts. That the people had, in the first ages, a large share in ecclesiastical proceedings, and that their officers were chosen by themselves, is incontrovertibly evident, as well from scripture as from the authentic monuments of antiquity. The epistles of St. Cyprian, to go no farther, are as full in proof of this point as if they had been written on purpose to establish it. The transfer of power, first from the people to their ministers, and afterwards from them to the Bishop of Rome, was a gradual work, not fully accomplished till many centuries had elapsed from the Christian era. Until the conversion of Constantine, the christian church was an *imperium in imperio*, a spiritual republic, subsisting in the midst of the Roman empire, on which it was completely independent; and its most momentous affairs were directed by popular suffrage. Nor did it in this state, either excite the jealousy or endanger the repose of the civil magistrate; since the distinction betwixt the concerns of this world and those of another, so ably illustrated by Locke, taught the christians of that time to render to Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's, and to God the things that are God's. Instructed to yield obedience to princes for conscience' sake, they were not the less orderly or submissive because they declined their interference in the suppression of error, or the punishment of ecclesiastical delinquency. If there be that inseparable connexion between political

disaffection and the exercise of popular rights in religion which this writer contends, the primitive christians must have been in a deplorable state; since it would have been impossible for them to quiet the just apprehensions of government without placing a heathen emperor at the head of the church. What must we think of the knowledge of a writer who was ignorant of these facts; of the candour which suppressed them; or of the humanity which finds an occasion of aspersing his fellow-christians in what escaped the malignity of heathen persecutors!

The dissenters will not fail to remind the writer, that the British is a mixed, not an absolute, monarchy; that the habit of considering the people as nothing is as repugnant to its spirit as that of making them every thing; and that to vest the whole power in the hands of one person, without check or control, is more suited to the genius of the Turkish than of the British government. And to this retort, it must be confessed, the conduct of the high-church party, who have seldom scrupled to promulgate maxims utterly subversive of liberty, would lend a very colourable support. The whole topic, however, is invidious, absurd, and merely calculated to mislead; since the constitution of the christian church is fixed by the will of its Founder, the dictates of which we are not at liberty to accommodate or bend to the views of human policy. The dispute respecting ecclesiastical government must, like every other on religion, be determined,

if it ever be determined at all, by an appeal to scripture, illustrated, perhaps, occasionally by the approved usages of the earliest antiquity. To connect political consequences with it, and to make it the instrument of exciting popular odium, is the indication of a bad cause and of a worse heart. After the specimens our readers have already had of the author's spirit, they will not be surprised to find he is not quite satisfied with the Toleration Act, which, he complains, has been perverted from its purpose of affording relief to tender consciences to that of *making* dissenters. We are not acute enough to comprehend this distinction. We have always supposed that it was the intention of the legislature, by that act, to enable protestant dissenters to worship where they pleased, after giving proper notice to the magistrate: how their availing themselves of this liberty can be construed into an abuse of the act, we are at a loss to conceive. This writer would tolerate dissenters, but not allow them to propagate their sentiments; that is, he would permit them that liberty of thinking which none can restrain, but not of speaking and acting, which are alone subject to the operation of law.

It is quite of a piece with the narrow prejudices of such a man, to complain of it as an intolerable hardship, that a minister of the establishment is sometimes in danger, through the undistinguishing spirit of hospitality, of being invited to sit down with religionists of different descriptions; and he avows his manly resolution of going without his

dinner rather than expose himself to such an indignity. It is certainly a most lamentable thing to reflect, that a regular clergyman may possibly lose *caste* by mixing at the hospitable board with some of those who will be invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb. When Burke was informed that Mr. Godwin held gratitude to be a crime, he replied, "I will take care not to be accessory to his committing that crime." We hope the lovers of hospitality will take the hint, and never insult the author of "Zeal without Innovation" by exposing him to the touch of the ceremonially unclean.

Although we have already trespassed on the patience of our readers, we cannot dismiss this part of the subject without craving their indulgence a little longer. We are much concerned to witness the spirit of intolerance that pervades many recent publications. If the uniform course of experience can prove any thing, it is, that the extension of any particular frame of church government will of itself contribute little to the interests of vital christianity. Suppose every inhabitant of the kingdom were to return to the bosom of the establishment to-morrow; what real accession would be gained to the kingdom of Christ? Is there any magic in the change of a name, which can convert careless, profane, irreligious dissenters into devout and pious churchmen? The virtuous part of them do honour to the christian profession in the situation they occupy

at present; and for the vicious, they could only infect and disgrace the community with which they proposed to associate. What means this incessant struggle to raise one party on the ruins of another; this assumption of infallibility, and the clamorous demand for the interposition of the legislature, which we so often witness? If the writers to whom we allude will honestly tell us they are apprehensive of their "craft" being in danger, we will give them credit for sincerity; but to attempt to cover their bigotry under the mask of piety, is too gross a deception. Were the measures adopted for which these men are so violent, they would scarcely prove more injurious to religion than to the interests of the established church; to which the accession of numbers would be no compensation for the loss of that activity and spirit which are kept alive by the neighbourhood of rival sects. She would suffer rapid encroachments from infidelity; and the indolence and secularity too incident to opulent establishments would hasten her downfal. Amidst the increasing degeneracy of the clergy, which must be the inevitable effect of destroying the necessity of vigilance and exertion, the people that now crowd the conventicle would not repair to the church: they would be scattered and dissipated, like water no longer confined within its banks. In a very short time, we have not the smallest doubt, the attendance at church would be much less than it is now. A religion which, by leaving no choice, can

produce no attachment,—a religion invested with the stern rigour of law, and associated in the public mind, and in public practice, with prisons and pillories and gibbets,—would be a noble match, to be sure, for the subtle spirit of impiety, and the enormous and increasing corruption of the times. It is amusing to reflect what ample elbow-room the worthy rector would possess; how freely he might expatiate in his wide domain; and how much the effect of his denunciations against schism would be heightened by echoing through so large a void.

> "Hîc vasto rex Æolus antro
> Luctantes ventos tempestatesque sonoras
> Imperio premit."

The Gallican church, no doubt, looked upon it as a signal triumph, when she prevailed on Louis the Fourteenth to repeal the edict of Nantes, and to suppress the protestant religion. But what was the consequence? Where shall we look, after this period, for her Fenelons and her Pascals—where for the distinguished monuments of piety and learning which were the glory of her better days? As for piety, she perceived she had no occasion for it, when there was no lustre of christian holiness surrounding her; nor for learning, when she had no longer any opponents to confute, or any controversies to maintain. She felt herself at liberty to become as ignorant, as secular, as irreligious as she pleased; and, amidst the silence

and darkness she had created around her, she drew the curtains and retired to rest. The accession of numbers she gained by suppressing her opponents, was like the small extension of length a body acquires by death: the feeble remains of life were extinguished, and she lay a putrid corpse, a public nuisance, filling the air with pestilential exhalations. Such, there is every reason to believe, would be the effect of similar measures in England. That union among christians, which it is so desirable to recover, must, we are persuaded, be the result of something more heavenly and divine than legal restraints or angry controversies. Unless an angel were to descend for that purpose, the spirit of division is a disease which will never be healed by troubling the waters. We must expect the cure from the increasing prevalence of religion, and from a copious communication of the Spirit, to produce that event. A more extensive diffusion of piety, among all sects and parties, will be the best and only preparation for a cordial union. Christians will then be disposed to appreciate their differences more equitably; to turn their chief attention to points on which they agree; and, in consequence of loving each other more, to make every concession consistent with a good conscience. Instead of wishing to vanquish others, every one will be desirous of being vanquished by the truth. An awful fear of God, and an exclusive desire of discovering his mind, will hold a torch before them in their inquiries, which will strangely

illuminate the path in which they are to tread. In the room of being repelled by mutual antipathy, they will be insensibly drawn nearer to each other by the ties of mutual attachment. A larger measure of the spirit of Christ would prevent them from converting every incidental variation into an impassable boundary; or from condemning the most innocent and laudable usages for fear of symbolizing with another class of christians—an odious spirit, with which the writer under consideration is strongly impregnated. The general prevalence of piety in different communities, would inspire that mutual respect, that heartfelt homage for the virtues conspicuous in the character of their respective members, which would urge us to ask with astonishment and regret, Why cannot we be one? What is it that obstructs our union? Instead of maintaining the barrier which separates us from each other, and employing ourselves in fortifying the frontiers of hostile communities, we should be anxiously devising the means of narrowing the grounds of dispute, by drawing the attention of all parties to those fundamental and catholic principles, in which all concur.

To this we may add, that a more perfect subjection to the authority of the great Head of the church would restrain men from inventing new terms of communion, from lording it over conscience, or from exacting a scrupulous compliance with things which the word of God has left indifferent. That sense of imperfection we ought

ever to cherish would incline us to be looking up for superior light, and make us think it not improbable that, in the long night which has befallen us, we have all more or less mistaken our way, and have much to learn and much to correct. The very idea of identifying a particular party with the church would be exploded; the foolish clamour about schism hushed; and no one, however mean and inconsiderable, be expected to surrender his conscience to the claims of ecclesiastical dominion. The New Testament is surely not so obscure a book, that, were its contents to fall into the hands of a hundred serious, impartial men, it would produce such opposite conclusions as must necessarily issue in their forming two or more separate communions. It is remarkable, indeed, that the chief points about which real christians are divided, are points on which that volume is silent—mere human fabrications, which the presumption of men has attached to the christian system. A larger communication of the Spirit of truth would insensibly lead christians into a similar train of thinking; and being more under the guidance of that infallible Teacher, they would gradually tend to the same point, and settle in the same conclusions. Without such an influence as this, the coalescing into one communion would probably be productive of much mischief: it certainly would do no sort of good, since it would be the mere result of intolerance and pride, acting upon indolence and fear.

During the present disjointed state of things, then, nothing remains but for every one to whom the care of any part of the church of Christ is intrusted, to exert himself to the utmost in the promotion of vital religion, in cementing the friendship of the good, and repressing, with a firm and steady hand, the heats and eruptions of party spirit. He will find sufficient employment for his time and his talents in inculcating the great truths of the gospel, and endeavouring to "form Christ" in his hearers, without blowing the flames of contention, or widening that breach which is already the disgrace and calamity of the christian name. Were our efforts uniformly to take this direction, there would be an *identity* in the impression made by religious instruction; the distortion of party features would gradually disappear; and christians would everywhere approach toward that ideal beauty spoken of by painters, which is combined of the finest lines and traits conspicuous in individual forms. Since they have all drunk into the same spirit, it is manifest nothing is wanting but a larger portion of that spirit, to lay the foundation of a solid, cordial union. It is to the immoderate attachment to secular interest, the love of power, and the want of reverence for truth, not to the obscurities of revelation, we must impute the unhappy contentions among christians—maladies, which nothing can correct but deep and genuine piety. The true *schismatic* is not so properly the person who declines a compliance with what he

judges to be wrong, though he may be mistaken in that judgement, as the man who, like the author before us, sedulously employs every artifice to alienate the affections of good men from each other.

Having animadverted on the illiberality of this writer toward persons of different persuasions, we now proceed to notice his representations of the state of religion, together with his treatment of that description of the clergy with whom he has been accustomed to associate.

The cause of religion he represents as in a very declining state.

"Some persons now living," he says, "can re-
"member the time, when absence from church
"was far from being so common as it is now be-
"come. Then, the more considerable heads of
"families were generally seen in the house of God,
"with their servants as well as children. This
"visible acknowledgement of the importance of
"religion had a good effect on families of inferior
"condition: the presence of the merchant and his
"household brought the tradesman and his family;
"and the example of the latter induced his jour-
"neymen and out-door servants to come to church.
"But this is not a description of modern habits.
"In many pews, once regularly filled by the entire
"household to which they belonged, it is now
"common to see only a small portion of the family,
"and often not an individual. Two or three of
"the younger branches, from the female side of

"the house, occasionally attend, with, perhaps, "the mother, but without the father and the sons: "the father, wearied with business, wants a little "relaxation; and to the young men, not sus- "pecting their want of instruction, a rural excur- "sion offers something interesting, while the "tranquil service of a church is too tame an "occupation for their unexhausted spirits. Nor "among the few who attend public worship are "they always the same individuals that we see "in the house of God. So that it does not appear "to be from steady principle, and still less from "the influence of parental authority, that some "of the family are occasionally there. The chil- "dren are left to themselves; they may go to "church if they choose to do so; they incur no "displeasure from the father, they excite no grief "in his bosom, if they stay away. There is "no disreputation attaching to absence. It falls "rather upon the contrary conduct; any uniform "attendance on divine worship being frequently "considered a mark of imbecility or demureness.

"To account for the thinness of our parochial "congregations, some allege that there is not a "sufficient quantity of naturally attractive circum- "stances in the ordinary service of the church. "But it is observable, that where our liturgy is "used in its *grandest* form, the attendance is as "far from being numerous as it is elsewhere. "It might be expected, and especially in an age "in which a taste for *music* so generally prevails,

"that in a metropolis containing near a million "of inhabitants, there might be more persons "drawn by the grandeur of cathedral worship "to the place where it is performed, than could "well be accommodated in one church. The "cathedral of London, however, presents no such "scene. With a numerous attendance of mini- "sters, the finest specimens of church-music, and "these performed with that effect which profes- "sional qualification gives to such compositions, "the seats of St. Paul's cathedral are seldom half "filled." Pp. 2—4.

Though we acknowledge the truth of his statement in a great measure, we are far from drawing from it the inference he wishes to impress. Whenever places of worship are thinly attended, at least in the established church, we have uniformly found it to proceed from a cause very distinct from the general decay of piety: it results from the absence of that sort of instruction which naturally engages the attention and fixes the heart. In one view, we are fully aware a great alteration has taken place: an attachment to the mere forms of religion has much subsided; the superstitious reverence, formerly paid to consecrated places and a pompous ceremonial, has waxed old; so that nothing will now command a full attendance at places set apart for divine worship, but the preaching of the gospel, or of something, at least, that may be mistaken for it. Instead of concurring with the author in considering this as evincing the low state of

christianity amongst us, we are disposed to look upon it in a contrary light, being fully convinced that a readiness to acquiesce in the mere forms and ceremonies of religion, to the neglect of that truth which sanctifies the church, is one of the most dangerous errors to which men can be exposed. There is something in the constitution of human nature so abhorrent from the absence of all religion, that we are inclined to believe more are ruined by embracing some counterfeit instead of the true, than by the rejection of true and false altogether. We are not sorry, therefore, to learn, that the music at St. Paul's is not found a sufficient substitute for "the joyful sound," nor a numerous shew of ministers accepted by the people, in the room of "Christ crucified set forth before them." Let the truths which concern men's eternal salvation be faithfully taught in that noble edifice, and the complaint of slender attendance will soon cease. In the mean time, of that part of the citizens who might be expected to frequent the cathedral, some are too gay and fashionable not to prefer the music of the theatre and the opera; and some are serious christians, whose hunger for the bread of life will not be satisfied or diverted by the symphonies of an organ, or the splendour of canonical dresses.

He who is resolved to see nothing but what grows in his own inclosure, may report that "all is barren," though the fields around him bloom like the garden of Eden; and such is the strength of

this writer's prejudices, that it is morally impossible for him to give a just representation of facts. In forming his estimate of the state of religion, he is resolved to look only where he knows nothing is to be seen; and absurdly complains of the want of a crop where he is conscious the soil has never been cultivated. Effects must be looked for from their natural causes: men do not gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles; nor are the fruits of christianity to be expected in the absence of the gospel. Notwithstanding this writer's gloomy prognostications, we have no doubt of the kingdom of Christ making sensible advances; and, in support of this opinion, we adduce the wider extension of religious truth, the multitude of places where the gospel is preached in its purity, the general disposition to attend it, the establishment of Sunday schools, the circulation, with happy effect, of innumerable tracts, the translation of the Scriptures into foreign languages, and their more extensive communication to all nations, the formation of missionary societies, the growing unanimity among christians, and the prodigious increase of faithful ministers in the established church. We presume these facts may be allowed a degree of weight, sufficient to overbalance the thin attendance at St. Paul's. It is not a little surprising that a writer, who professes to exhibit a correct idea of the religious state of the nation, should pay no attention to these circumstances, or content himself with alluding to them in terms expressive of chagrin

and vexation. Regarding the extensive institutions, and the diffusive benefits, which the efforts of serious christians in different connexions have produced, as a contraband article, not entitled to be mentioned in the estimate of our moral wealth, he represents us as generally sunk in spiritual sloth and poverty. We should not learn from this writer that attempts were making for the universal propagation of christianity; that translations of the Scriptures were going on in different languages; or that a zeal for the conversion of pagans had occasioned a powerful reaction at home, by producing efforts, hitherto unexampled, toward carrying the gospel into the darkest corners of the kingdom. We should never suspect, from reading his work, that any material alteration had taken place within the last fifty years, or that new life had been infused into the professing world beyond what we might conjecture, perhaps, from certain indirect references and dark insinuations. Without noticing these facts, he calls upon us to join in pathetic lamentations over the prostrate state of religion, upon no better ground than the neglect of places of worship where the gospel is *not* preached, and where there is little to attract attention beside the privilege of hearing *fine music* and seeing *fine ministers* for nothing. It is a consolation to us to be convinced that the state of things is much otherwise than he represents; that more persons are brought acquainted with the glad tidings of the gospel, and more minds penetrated with the concerns

of eternity, than at any period since the Reformation.

Thus far we dispute the justice of this author's statement, and are disposed to question the truth of the inference he has drawn from some insulated facts. But this is not the only fault we have to find with this part of his work. He has not only, in our opinion, been betrayed into erroneous conclusions, but has utterly failed in catching the distinguishing features in the aspect of the times; so that his picture bears no sort of resemblance to the original. He has painted nothing; he has only given an account of a particular distortion or two; so that a foreigner would no more be able, by reading his work, to form an idea of the state of religion in England, than of a countenance he had never seen, by being told its chin was too long, or its nostrils were too wide. It must be evident to every one, that the most striking characteristic of the present times, is the violent, the outrageous opposition that is made to religion by multitudes, and the general disposition in the members of the community to take a decided part. To this circumstance the writer has never adverted. It is impossible to suppose it could escape his attention: we must therefore impute his silence to the well-weighed dictates of prudence, which admonished him of the possibility of betraying himself into inconveniences by such a discussion: nor need we be surprised, notwithstanding his boasted magnanimity, at his yielding

to these suggestions; since his magnanimity is of that sort, which makes a man very ready to insult his brethren, but very careful not to disgust his superiors. As we are happily exempt from these scruples, we shall endeavour, in as few words as possible, to put the reader in possession of our ideas on this subject.

The leading truths of revelation were all along retained in the church of Rome, but buried under such a mass of absurd opinions and superstitious observances, that they drew but little attention, and exerted a very inconsiderable influence in the practical application of the system. At the Reformation, they were effectually extricated and disengaged from errors with which they had been mingled, were presented in a blaze of light, and formed the basis of our national creed. As it was by pushing them to their legitimate consequences that the Reformers were enabled to achieve the conquest of popery, they were for a while retained in their purity, and every deviation from them denounced as menacing a revolt to the enemy. The Articles of the church were a real transcript of the principles the Reformers were most solicitous to inculcate; and, being supported by the mighty impulse which produced the Reformation, while that remained fresh and unbroken they constituted the real faith of the people. Afterwards they underwent an eclipse in the protestant church of England, as they had done in the church of Rome, though from causes somewhat different. The low

arminianism and intolerant bigotry of Laud paved the way for a change, which was not a little aided and advanced by the unbounded licentiousness and profligacy which overspread the kingdom after the Restoration: for it must be remembered that there is an intimate connexion between the perception and relish of truth and a right disposition of mind; that they have a reciprocal influence on each other; and that the mystery of faith can only be placed with safety in a pure conscience. When lewdness, profaneness, and indecency, reigned without control, and were practised without a blush, nothing, we may be certain, could be more repugnant to the prevailing taste, than the unadulterated word of God. There arose also, at that time, a set of divines who, partly in compliance with the popular humour, partly to keep at a distance from the puritans, and partly to gain the infidels, who then began to make their appearance, introduced a new sort of preaching, in which the doctrines of the Reformation, as they are usually styled, were supplanted by copious and elaborate disquisitions on points of morality. Their fame and ability imboldened their successors to improve upon their pattern, by consigning the Articles of the church to a still more perfect oblivion, by losing sight still more entirely of the peculiarities of the gospel, guarding more anxiously against every sentiment or expression that could agitate or alarm, and by shortening the length, and adding as much as possible to the dryness, of their moral lucubrations.

From that time, the idea commonly entertained in England of a perfect sermon, was that of a discourse upon some moral topic, clear, correct, and argumentative, in the delivery of which the preacher must be free from all suspicion of being moved himself, or of intending to produce emotions in his hearers; in a word, as remote as possible from such a method of reasoning on righteousness, temperance, and judgement, as should make a Felix tremble. This idea was very successfully realized, this singular model of pulpit eloquence carried to the utmost perfection; so that, while the bar, the parliament, and the theatre, frequently agitated and inflamed their respective auditories, the church was the only place where the most feverish sensibility was sure of being laid to rest. This inimitable apathy in the mode of imparting religious instruction, combined with the utter neglect of whatever is most touching or alarming in the discoveries of the gospel, produced their natural effect of extinguishing devotion in the established church, and of leaving it to be possessed by the dissenters; of whom it was considered as the distinguishing badge, and from that circumstance derived an additional degree of unpopularity. From these causes the people gradually became utterly alienated from the Articles of the church, eternal concerns dropped out of the mind, and what remained of religion was confined to an attention to a few forms and ceremonies. If any exception can be made to the justice of

these observations, it respects the doctrines of the Trinity and the atonement, which were often defended with ability, though in a dry and scholastic manner, and the discussion of which served to mark the return of the principal festivals of the church; while other points not less important,—such as the corruption of human nature, the necessity of the new birth, and justification by faith,—were either abandoned to oblivion, or held up to ridicule and contempt. The consequence was, that the creed established by law had no sort of influence in forming the sentiments of the people; the pulpit completely vanquished the desk; piety and puritanism were confounded in one common reproach; an almost pagan darkness in the concerns of salvation prevailed; and the English became the most irreligious people upon earth.

Such was the situation of things, when Whitfield and Wesley made their appearance; who, whatever failings the severest criticism can discover in their character, will be hailed by posterity as the second Reformers of England. Nothing was farther from the views of these excellent men, than to innovate in the established religion of their country; their sole aim was to recall the people to the good old way, and to imprint the doctrine of the Articles and Homilies on the spirits of men. But this doctrine had been confined so long to a dead letter, and so completely obliterated from the mind by contrary instruction, that the attempt to revive it met with all the opposition which innovation is

sure to encounter, in addition to what naturally results from the nature of the doctrine itself, which has to contend with the whole force of human corruption. The revival of the old appeared like the introduction of a new religion; and the hostility it excited was less sanguinary, but scarcely less virulent, than that which signalized the first publication of christianity. The gospel of Christ, or that system of truth which was laid as the foundation of the Reformation, has since made rapid advances; and, in every step of its progress, has sustained the most furious assault. Great Britain exhibits the singular spectacle of two parties contending, not whether christianity shall be received or rejected, but whether it shall be allowed to retain any thing spiritual: not whether the Articles and Homilies shall be repealed, but whether they shall be laid as the basis of public instruction. Infidelity being too much discredited by the atrocities in France, to hope for public countenance, the enemies of religion, instead of attacking the outworks of christianity, are obliged to content themselves with vilifying and misrepresenting its distinguishing doctrines. They are willing to retain the christian religion, providing it continue inefficient; and are wont to boast of their attachment to the established church, when it is manifest there is little in it they admire, except its splendour and its emoluments. The clerical order, we are sorry to say, first set the example; and, since evangelical principles have

been more widely diffused, have generally appeared in the foremost ranks of opposition. This is nothing more than might be naturally looked for. With all the respect we feel for the clergy, on account of their learning and talents, it is impossible not to know that many of them are mere men of the world, who have consequently the same objections to the gospel as others, together with some peculiar to themselves. As the very attempt of reviving doctrines which have been obliterated through their neglect, implies a tacit censure of their measures, so, wherever that attempt succeeds, it diminishes the weight of their ecclesiastical character. Deserted by the people, and eclipsed in the public esteem by many much their inferiors in literary attainments, they feel indignant: and if, as we will suppose, they sometimes suspect their being neglected has arisen from their inattention to important truths and indispensable duties, this increases their uneasiness. which, if it fails to reform, will inevitably exasperate them still more against those who are the innocent occasions of it. It is but fair to acknowledge, that, in conducting the controversy, they have generally kept within decent bounds, have often reasoned where others have railed, and have usually abstained from topics hackneyed by infidels and scoffers. But they cannot be vindicated from the charge of having, by a formal opposition to the gospel, inflamed the irreligious prejudices of the age, obstructed the work they were appointed to promote,

and imboldened others, who had none of their scruples or restraints, to outrage piety itself. The dragon has cast from his mouth such a flood of heresy and mischief, that Egypt, in the worst of her plagues, was not covered with more loathsome abominations. Creatures, which we did not suspect to have existed, have come forth from their retreats, some soaring into the regions of impiety on vigorous pinions, others crawling on the earth with a slow and sluggish motion, only to be tracked through the filthy slime of their impurities. We have seen writers of every order, from the Polyphemuses of the north to the contemptible dwarfs of the Critical Review; men of every party, infidels, churchmen, and dissenters,—a motley crew, who have not one thing in common, except their antipathy to religion,—join hands and heart on this occasion: a deadly taint of impiety has blended them in one mass; as things the most discordant, while they are *living* substances, will do perfectly well to putrefy together.

We are not at all alarmed at this extensive combination; we doubt not of its producing the most happy effects. It has arisen from the alarm the great enemy has felt at the extension of the gospel; and, by drawing the attention of the world more powerfully to it, will ultimately aid the cause it is intended to subvert. The public will not long be at a loss to determine where the truth lies, when they see in one party a visible fear of God, a constant appeal to his oracles, a

solicitude to promote the salvation of mankind; in the other, an indecent levity, an unbridled insolence, an unblushing falsehood, a hard unfeeling pride, a readiness to adopt any principles and assume any mask that will answer their purpose, together with a manifest aim to render the Scriptures of no authority, and religion of no effect.

Having so often alluded to the "evangelical clergy," we shall close this division of our remarks with exhibiting a slight outline of the doctrines by which the clergy of this class are distinguished. The term *evangelical* was first given them, simply on account of their preaching the gospel, or, in other words, their exhibiting with clearness and precision the peculiar truths of christianity. In every system there are some principles which serve to identify it, and in which its distinguishing essence consists. In the system of christianity, the rules of moral duty are not entitled to be considered in this light, partly because they are not peculiar to it, and partly because they are retained by professed infidels, who avow, without scruple, their admiration of the morality of the gospel. We must look, then, elsewhere, for the distinguishing character of christianity. It must be sought for in its doctrines, and, as its professed design is to conduct men to eternal happiness, in those doctrines which relate to the way of salvation, or the method of a sinner's reconciliation with God. There are some, we are aware, who would reduce the whole faith of a christian to a belief of the

Messiahship of Christ, without reflecting that, until we have fixed some specific ideas to the term Messiah, the proposition which affirms him to be such contains no information. The most discordant apprehensions are entertained by persons who equally profess that belief; some affirming him to be a mere man, others a being of the angelic order, and a third party that he essentially partakes of the divine nature. The first of these look upon his sufferings as merely exemplary; the last, as propitiatory and vicarious. It must be evident, then, from these views being at the utmost distance from each other, that the proposition that Christ is the Messiah conveys little information, while the import of its principal term is left vague and undetermined. The socinian and trinitarian, notwithstanding their verbal agreement, having a different object of worship, and a different ground of confidence, must be allowed to be of different religions. It requires but a very cursory perusal of the Articles of the established church, to determine to which of these systems *they* lend *their* support; or to perceive that the Deity of Christ, the doctrine of atonement for sin, the guilt and apostasy of man, and the necessity of the agency of the Spirit to restore the divine image, are asserted by them in terms the most clear and unequivocal. This question stands quite independent of the calvinistic controversy. Are the clergy, styled evangelical, to be blamed for preaching *these* doctrines? Before this can be

allowed, the Articles must be cancelled by the same authority by which they were established; or it must be shewn how it consists with integrity, to gain an introduction to the church by signifying an unfeigned assent and consent to certain articles of religion, with the intention of immediately banishing them from notice. The clamour against the clergy in question cannot, without an utter contempt of decency, be excited by the mere fact of their being known to hold and inculcate these doctrines; but by the manner of their teaching them, or the exclusive attention they are supposed to pay them, to the neglect of other parts of the system. The measure of zeal they display for them, they conceive to be justified, as well by a view of the actual state of human nature, as by the express declaration of the inspired oracles. Conceiving, with the compilers of the Articles, that the state of man is that of a fallen and apostate creature, they justly conclude that a mere code of morals is inadequate to his relief; that, having lost the favour of God by his transgression, he requires, not merely to be instructed in the rules of duty, but in the method of regaining the happiness he has forfeited; that the pardon of sin, or some compensation to divine justice for the injury he has done to the majesty of the supreme Lawgiver, are the objects which ought, in the first place, to occupy his attention. An acquaintance with the rules of duty may be sufficient to teach an innocent creature how to

secure the felicity he possesses, but can afford no relief to a guilty conscience, nor instruct the sinner how to recover the happiness he has lost. Let it be remembered, that christianity is essentially a restorative dispensation; it bears a continual respect to a state from which man is fallen, and is a provision for repairing that ruin which the introduction of moral evil has brought upon him. Exposed to the displeasure of God and the curse of his law, he stands in need of a Redeemer; disordered in his powers, and criminally averse to his duty, he equally needs a Sanctifier. As adapted to such a situation, much of the New Testament is employed in displaying the character and unfolding the offices of both, with a view of engaging him to embrace that scheme of mercy which the divine benignity has thought fit to exhibit in the gospel. The intention of St. John, in composing the evangelical history, coincides with the entire purpose and scope of revelation: "These things are written," said he, "that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, and that, believing, ye might have life through his name." Whoever considers that, upon every hypothesis except the socinian, christianity is a provision of mercy for an apostate and sinful world, through a divine Mediator, will acknowledge that something more is included in the idea of preaching the gospel, than the inculcation of moral duties; and that he who confines his attention to these, exchanges the character of a christian pastor for that of a fashionable

declaimer, or a philosophical moralist. If we turn our eyes to the ministry of the apostles, we perceive it to have consisted in "testifying repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ:" repentance, which is natural religion modified by the circumstances of a fallen creature, including a return to the path of duty; and faith, which is a practical compliance with the christian dispensation, by receiving the Saviour as "the way, the truth, and the life." Faith and repentance being the primary duties enjoined under the gospel, and the production of these the professed end of the inspired writers, we need not wonder that those who are ambitious to tread in their steps, insist much, in the course of their ministry, on the topics which supply the principal motives to these duties;—the evil of sin, the extent of human corruption, together with the dignity, power, and grace of the Redeemer. Remembering that the object of repentance is God, they do not, in treating of sin, satisfy themselves with displaying its mischievous effects in society: they expatiate on its contrariety to the divine nature; they speak of it chiefly as an affront offered to the authority of the Supreme Ruler; and represent no repentance as genuine which springs not from godly sorrow, or a concern for having displeased God. In this part of their office they make use of the moral law, which requires the devotion of the whole heart and unfailing obedience, as the sword of the Spirit, to pierce the conscience, and to con-

vince men that "by the deeds of it no flesh living can be justified, but that every mouth must be stopped, and the whole world become guilty before God." The uniform course of experience serves to convince them, that, till a deep impression of this truth be made on the heart, the character of the Saviour, and the promise of pardon through his blood, will produce no gratitude, and excite no interest. In inculcating faith in Christ, they cannot satisfy themselves with merely exhibiting the evidences of christianity; a mere assent to which, upon historical grounds, undeniably fails, in innumerable instances, of producing those effects which are uniformly ascribed to that principle in the New Testament; neither overcoming the world, nor purifying the heart, nor inducing newness of life. They are of opinion that the external evidences of the christian religion are chiefly of importance, on account of their tendency to fix the attention on Christ, the principal object exhibited in that dispensation; and the faith on which the Scriptures lay so much stress, and connect with such ineffable benefits, they conceive essentially to involve a personal reliance on Christ for salvation, accompanied with a cordial submission to his authority. Attempting to produce this scriptural faith, in a dependence upon the divine blessing, (without which the best means will be unsuccessful,) they dwell much on the dignity of his character as the Son of God, the admirable constitution of his person as "Immanuel, God

with us," the efficacy of his atonement, and the gracious tenour of his invitations, together with the agency of that Spirit which is intrusted to him as the Mediator, to be imparted to the members of his mystical body. In their view, to preach the gospel is to preach Christ; they perceive the New Testament to be full of him: and while they imbibe that spirit with which it is replete, they feel a sacred ambition to diffuse "the savour of his name in every place."

Let it not be inferred from hence, that they are inattentive to the interests of practical religion, or that their ministry is merely occupied in explaining and enforcing a doctrinal system. None lay more stress on the duties of a holy life, or urge with more constancy the necessity of their hearers shewing their faith by their works; and they are incessantly affirming, with St. James, that the former without the latter "is dead, being alone." Though, in common with the inspired writers, they ascribe their transition from a state of death to a state of justification solely to faith in Christ previous to good works actually performed, yet they equally insist upon a performance of those works as the evidence of justifying faith; and, supposing life to be spared, as the indispensable condition of final happiness. The law, not altered in its requirements, (for what was once duty they conceive to be duty still,) but attempered in its sanctions to the circumstances of a fallen creature, they exhibit as the perpetual standard of rectitude,

as the sceptre of majesty by which the Saviour rules his disciples. They conceive it to demand the same things, though not with the same rigour, under the gospel dispensation as before. The matter of duty they look upon as unalterable, and the only difference to be this; that, whereas, under the covenant of works, the condition of life was sinless obedience, under the new covenant, an obedience sincere and affectionate, though imperfect, is accepted for the sake of the Redeemer. At the same time they do not cease to maintain, that the faith which they hold to be justifying comprehends in it the seminal principle of every virtue; that if genuine, it will not fail to be fruitful; and that a christian has it in his power to shew his faith "*by his works*," and by no other means. Under a full conviction of the fallen state of man, together with his moral incapacity to do what is pleasing to God, they copiously insist on the agency of the Spirit, and affectionately urge their hearers to implore his gracious assistance. From *no class* of men will you hear more solemn warnings against sin, more earnest calls to repentance, or more full and distinct delineations of the duties resulting from every relation in life, accompanied with a peculiar advantage of drawing from the mysteries of the gospel the strongest motives to strengthen the abhorrence of the one, and enforce the practice of the other. In their hands, morality loses nothing but the pagan air with which it is too often invested. The morality which they enjoin is of heavenly origin, the

pure emanation of truth and love, sprinkled with atoning blood, and baptized into an element of christian sanctity. That they are not indifferent to the interests of virtue is sufficiently apparent, from the warm approbation they uniformly express of the excellent work of Mr. Wilberforce, which is not more conspicuous for the orthodoxy of its tenets than for the purity and energy of its moral instruction. If we look at the effects produced from the ministry of these men, they are such as might be expected to result from a faithful exhibition of the truth of God. Wherever they labour, careless sinners are awakened, profligate transgressors are reclaimed, the mere form of religion is succeeded by the power, and fruits of genuine piety appear in the holy and exemplary lives of their adherents. A visible reformation in society at large, and, in many instances, unequivocal proofs of solid conversion, attest the purity of their doctrines and the utility of their labours; effects which we challenge their enemies to produce where a different sort of teaching prevails.

The controversy between them and their opponents, to say the truth, turns on a point of the greatest magnitude: the question at issue respects the choice of a supreme end, and whether we will take "the Lord to be our God." Their opponents are for confining religion to an acknowledgement of the being of a God and the truth of the christian revelation, accompanied with some external rites of devotion, while the world is allowed the exclusive

dominion of the heart; *they* are for carrying into effect the apostolic mission by summoning men to repentance, and engaging them to an entire surrender of themselves to the service of God, through a Mediator. In the system of human life, their opponents assign to devotion a very narrow and limited agency: *they* contend for its having the supreme control. The former expect nothing from religion but the restraint of outward enormities by the fear of future punishment; in the views of the latter, it is productive of positive excellence, a perennial spring of peace, purity, and joy. Instead of regarding it as a matter of occasional reference, they consider it as a principle of constant operation. While their opponents always overlook, and frequently deny, the specific difference between the church and the world; in *their* views the christian is a pilgrim and stranger in the earth, one whose heart is in heaven, and who is supremely engaged in the pursuit of eternal realities. Their fiercest opposers, it is true, give to Jesus Christ the title of the Saviour of the world; but it requires very little attention to perceive, that their hope of future happiness is placed on the supposed preponderancy of the virtues over the vices, and the claims which they then conceive to result on the *justice* of God; while the opposite party consider themselves as mere pensioners on *mercy*, flee for refuge to the cross, and ascribe their hopes of salvation entirely to the grace of the Redeemer.

For our parts, supposing the being and perfec-

tions of God once ascertained, we can conceive of no point at which we can be invited to stop, short of that serious piety and habitual devotion which the evangelical clergy enforce. To live without religion, to be devoid of habitual devotion, is natural and necessary in him who disbelieves the existence of its object; but upon what principles he can justify his conduct, who professes to believe in a Deity, without aiming to please him in all things, without placing his happiness in his favour, we are utterly at a loss to comprehend.

We cannot dismiss this part of the subject without remarking the exemplary moderation of the clergy of this class on those intricate points which unhappily divide the christian church; the questions, we mean, that relate to predestination and free-will, on which, equally remote from pelagian heresy and antinomian licentiousness, they freely tolerate and indulge a diversity of opinion, embracing calvinists and arminians with little distinction, provided the calvinism of the former be practical and moderate, and the arminianism of the latter evangelical and devout. The greater part of them lean, we believe, to the doctrine of general redemption, and love to represent the gospel as bearing a friendly aspect toward the eternal happiness of all to whom it is addressed; but they are much less anxious to establish a polemical accuracy than to "win souls to Christ."

The opposition they encounter from various quarters will not surprise those who reflect that

" they are not of the world," that " the world loves only its own," and naturally feels a dislike to such as testify that its works are evil. The christianity of the greater part of the community is merely nominal: and it necessarily follows, that wherever the truths of religion are faithfully exhibited and practically exemplified, they will be sure to meet with the same friends and the same enemies as at their first promulgation; they will be still exposed to assault from the prejudices of unrenewed minds, they will be upheld by the same almighty power, and will continue to insinuate themselves into the hearts of the simple and sincere with the same irresistible force.

We hope our readers will excuse the length to which we have extended our delineation of the principles of the clergy styled " evangelical," reflecting how grossly they have been misrepresented, and that, until the subject is placed fairly and fully in view, it is impossible to form an equitable judgement of the treatment they have met with from the writer under consideration.

The first charge he adduces against the evangelical clergy is that of enthusiasm. Enthusiasm, according to Mr. Locke, is that state of mind which disposes a person to give a stronger assent to a religious proposition than the evidence will justify. According to the more common and popular notion, it implies a pretence to supernatural communications, on which is founded a belief in certain doctrines, and the performance of certain actions, which

66851

the Scriptures have not authorized or revealed—a dangerous delusion, as it tends to disannul the standard of religion, and by the extravagancies and follies it produces, to bring piety into disgrace. We hold enthusiasm in as much abhorrence as our author does; but we ask, what is the proportion of the evangelical clergy who are guilty of it? and for *every* individual amongst them to whom it attaches, we will engage to produce *ten* amongst their opponents who are deficient in the essential branches of *morality*. Yet we should esteem it extreme illiberality in a writer to brand the clergy in general with immorality. There may be some few, among the many hundreds whom the author has undertaken to describe, who are real enthusiasts; but where is the candour or justice of mingling this feature in the delineation of the body? We appeal to the religious public, whether they are not, on the contrary, eminently conspicuous for their close adherence "to the law and to the testimony," and for their care to enjoin nothing on their hearers without direct warrant from the Bible? If every one is to be charged with enthusiasm whose piety is of a more fervid complexion than the accuser is disposed to sympathize with, or can readily account for, we must indeed despair of convincing this writer of the futility of his allegation. They have the *zeal*, which, to him who makes what is most prevalent in the church his model, *must* look like *innovation*.

He frequently insinuates that there is a dispo-

sition in them to symbolize with the dissenters, though he had allowed, at the very outset of his work, that they most strictly conform to the prescribed ritual, have no scruples against canonical obedience, and are most firmly attached to the ecclesiastical constitution. Speaking of the established church, he says—

"They (the evangelical clergy) approve, they "admire the church in which they serve. They "rejoice in being ministers of such a church. In- "stead of being indifferent to its continuance, their "devoutest wish is, that it may stand firm on its "basis. They consider it as the greatest of bless- "ings to their country. They observe, with no "little anxiety, separatism gaining ground upon it. "And this, not from an invidious principle, but "because hereby an alienation, *in perpetuity*, is "produced in many minds, from a constitution "which they consider as best providing for the "universal conveyance and permanent publication "of christian truth. Its continuance they likewise "consider as the surest pledge of religious liberty "to all who wish for that blessing. And in this "view they pity the short-sightedness of those "religious persons, who forward any measures "which make against the stability of the national "church. They view them as men undermining "the strongest bulwark of *their own* security and "comfort, and conceive that protestant sects, of "every name, however they might prefer their "own modes of religion, would devoutly pray for

"the support and prosperity of the church of "England, as it now stands: '*Sua si bona norint.*' "In short, the ecclesiastical establishment of this "country is, in their views, what 'the ark of God' "was in the estimation of the pious Israelite; and "'their hearts tremble' more for that, than for "any thing else, the stability of which may seem "to be endangered in these eventful times. They "would consider its fall as one of the heaviest "judgements that could befall the nation."—Pp. 128, 129.

Any such approach to the dissenters as is inconsistent with their professional engagements, is incompatible with the truth of this testimony. But let us go on to notice another imputation.

"I am constantly," says the author, "ready to "admit that there is a great deal of truth in what "is often alleged by their opponents; namely, that "under their preaching there has arisen an un-"favourable opinion of the body of the clergy. "To excite a hatred of what is evil, is, undoubtedly, "one purpose of christian instruction. But while "the preacher is attempting this, he must take "care that he do not call forth the malignant "passions. This he is almost sure to do, if he "point out a certain set of men, as persons to "whom his reprehensions particularly apply. The "hearers, too generally apt to forget themselves, "are drawn still further from the consideration of "their own faults, when they can find a defined "class of men, on whom they can fasten the guilt

" of any alleged error; on them they will discharge " their gall, and mistake their rancour for *righteous-* " *ness.*"—Pp. 154, 155, *Second Edition.*

Two questions arise on this point: first, how far an unfavourable opinion of the body of the clergy is just; and secondly, what sort of influence the evangelical party have had in producing it. " The " clergy, as a body," the author complains, " are " considered by them and their adherents as men " who do not preach the gospel." If we understand him, he means to assert that the clergy, as a body, *do* preach the gospel; for we cannot suspect him of being so ridiculous as to complain of their being considered in their just and true light. Here we have the very singular spectacle of gospel ministers exclaiming with bitterness against some of their brethren for preaching the doctrines of the new birth, justification by faith, the internal operations of the Spirit, and whatever else characterised the faith of the reformers, which we have the satisfaction of learning, from this most liberal writer, are no parts of the gospel. Or, if he demur in assenting to such a proposition, it is incumbent on him to explain what are the *doctrines distinct* from those we have mentioned, the inculcation of which has excited the opposition of the clergy. We, in our great simplicity, supposed that the ministers styled evangelical had been opposed for insisting on points intimately related to the gospel; but we are now taught, from high authority, that the controversy is entirely of another kind, and relates

to subjects, with respect to which the preachers of the gospel may indifferently arrange themselves on either side. We are under great obligations to our author for clearing up this perplexing affair, and so satisfactorily shewing both parties they were fighting in the dark. Poor George Whitfield! how much to be pitied! who exhausted himself with incredible labours, and endured a storm of persecution, in communicating religious instruction to people who were already furnished with more than ten thousand preachers of the gospel! To be serious, however, on a subject which, if there be one in the world, demands seriousness,—it is an incontrovertible fact, that the doctrines of the Reformation are no longer heard in the greater part of the established pulpits, and that there has been a general departure from the truths of the gospel, which are exhibited in the ministry of a small, though increasing, minority of the clergy. The author *knows* this to be a fact, although he has the meanness to express himself in a manner that would imply his being of a contrary opinion. We wish him all the consolation he can derive from this trait of godly simplicity, as well as from his reflection on the effect which his flattery is likely to produce, in awakening the vigilance, and improving the character, of his newly-discovered race of gospel ministers. With respect to the degree in which an unfavourable opinion of the clergy is to be ascribed to the representations of the evangelical party, we have to remark, that

they possess too much attachment to their order to delight in depreciating it; and that they are under no temptation to attempt it with a view to secure the preference of their hearers; who, supposing them to have derived benefit from their labours, will be sufficiently aware of the difference between light and darkness, between famine and plenty. Were they to insinuate, with this author, that all their clerical brethren are actually engaged in the same cause, and are promoting the same object with themselves, they would at once be charged with a violation of truth, and be considered as insulting the common sense of the public.

The author is extremely offended at Dr. Haweis, on account of the following passage in his History of the Church of Christ. "Different itinerant societies have been established in order to send instruction to the poor, in the villages where the gospel is not preached. Probably not less than five hundred places of divine worship have been opened within the last three years." Dr. Haweis, in making this representation, undoubtedly conceived himself to be stating a simple fact, without suspecting any lover of the gospel would call it in question. The author's comment upon it is curious enough. "It would be scarcely credible," he says, "were not the time and place marked "with sufficient precision, that a clergyman, be-"neficed in the Church of England, was describing, "in the foregoing passage, something which had "lately been taking place in this country!" It is

surely very credible that there are five hundred places in England where the gospel is not preached; the incredible part of the business, then, consists in a "beneficed clergyman" daring to assert it, who, according to the author, is a sort of personage who is bound never to utter a truth that will offend the delicate ears of the clergy, especially on so trivial an occasion as that of describing the state of religion in England. What a magnanimity of spirit, and how far is this author from the suspicion of being a man-pleaser!

After acknowledging that the ministers he is characterizing have been *unjustly* charged with infringing on canonical regularity, he adds,

"Would it were as easy to defend them *univer-*
"*sally*,* against those who accuse them of vanity,
"of courting popularity, of effrontery, of coarse-
"ness, of the want of that affectionate spirit which
"should breathe through all the ministrations of a
"christian teacher, of their commonly appearing
"before a congregation with an objurgatory aspect,
"as if their minds were always brooding over some
"matter of accusation against their charge, instead
"of their feeling toward them as a father does
"toward his children."—P. 157.

The reader has, in this passage, a tolerable specimen of the "vanity" and "effrontery" of this writer, as well as of that "objurgatory aspect" he has thought fit to assume toward his brethren,

* The word *universally*, marked in italics, was inserted *after* the first edition.

not without strong suspicion of assuming it from a desire to "court popularity." It would be a mere waste of words to attempt to reply to such an accusation, which merits attention on no other account than its exhibiting a true picture of his mind.

"As for the matter," he proceeds to observe, "of which the sermons delivered by some of them "are composed, it is contemptible in the extreme. "Though truths of great importance are brought "forward, yet, as if those who delivered them "were born to ruin the cause in which they are "engaged, they are presented to the auditory, "associated with such meanness, imbecility, or "absurdity, as to afford a complete triumph to "those who are adverse to their propagation. "We are disgusted by the violation of all the "rules, which the common sense of mankind "teaches them to expect the observance of on "the occasion. It is true, indeed, that something "is heard about Christ, about faith and repen-"tance, about sin and grace; but in vain we look "for argument, or persuasion, or suavity, or reve-"rential demeanour; qualities which ought never "to be absent, where it is of the utmost impor-"tance that the judgement be convinced, and the "affections gained."—P. 158.

Unfair and illiberal in the extreme as this representation is, it contains an important concession,—that the lowest preachers among them have the wisdom to make a right selection of topics, and to

bring forward truths of great importance; a circumstance sufficient of itself to give them an infinite superiority over the "apes of Epictetus."* A great diversity of talents must be expected to be found amongst them; but it has not been our lot to hear of any, whose labours a good man would think it right to treat with indiscriminate contempt. As they are called, for the most part, to address the middle and lower classes of society, their language is plain and simple: speaking in the presence of God, their address is solemn; and, as becomes "the ambassadors of Christ," their appeals to the conscience are close and cogent. Few, if any, among them, aspire to the praise of consummate orators—a character which we despair of ever seeing associated, in high perfection, with that of a christian teacher. The minister of the gospel is called "to declare the testimony of God," which is always weakened by a profuse employment of the ornaments of secular eloquence. Those exquisite paintings and nice touches of art, in which the sermons of the French preachers excel so much, excite a kind of attention, and produce a species of pleasure, not in perfect accordance with devotional feeling. The imagination is too much excited and employed, not to interfere with the more awful functions of conscience; the hearer is absorbed in admiration; and the exercise which ought to be an instrument of conviction, becomes a feast of taste. In the hand of a Massillon, the subject of death

* Horsley.

itself is blended with so many associations of the most delicate kind, and calls up so many sentiments of natural tenderness, as to become a source of theatrical amusement, rather than of religious sensibility. Without being insensible to the charms of eloquence, it is our decided opinion that a sermon of Mr. Gisborne's is more calculated to "convert a sinner from the error of his way," than one of Massillon's. It is a strong objection to a studied attempt at oratory in the pulpit, that it usually induces a neglect of the peculiar doctrines of christian verity, where the preacher feels himself restrained, and is under the necessity of explaining texts, of obviating objections, and elucidating difficulties, which limits the excursions of imagination, and confines it within narrow bounds. He is, therefore, eager to escape from these fetters; and, instead of "*reasoning out of the Scriptures,*" expatiates in the flowery fields of declamation. It would be strange, however, if the evangelical clergy did not excel their contemporaries in the art of preaching, to which they devote so much more of their attention. While others are accustomed to describe it under the very appropriate phrase of "doing duty," it is their business and their delight. They engage in it under many advantages. Possessed of the same education with their brethren, they usually speak to crowded auditories; the truths they deliver command attention; and they are accustomed to ascend the pulpit under an awful sense of the weight and importance of their

charge. Under such circumstances, it is next to impossible for them not to become powerful and impressive. Were it not indelicate to mention names, we could easily confirm our observations by numerous living examples. Suffice it to say, that perhaps no denomination of christians ever produced so many excellent preachers; and that it is entirely owing to them, that the ordinance of preaching has not fallen, in the established church, into utter contempt.

With respect to the remarks the author makes on the "hypochondriacal cast of preaching heard among them," of their "holding their hearers by details of conflicts and experiences," and of their "*prosings* on the hidings of God's face,"* we need not detain our readers. To good men it will be matter of serious regret, to find a writer, from whom different things were to be expected, treat the concerns of the spiritual warfare in so light and ludicrous a manner; while the irreligious will heartily join in the laugh. It should be remembered that he is performing quarantine, purging himself from the suspicion of *methodism*, and that nothing can answer this purpose so well as a spice of profaneness.

After expressing his contempt of the evangelical clergy as *preachers*, he proceeds to characterise them in the following manner as *writers*:—

"Here," says he, "I can with great truth affirm,

* In the second edition, the author has changed the term "*prosings*" into "*discoursings*."

"that many included in that description of clergy-
"men now under consideration are sorely grieved,
"by much of what comes out as the produce of
"authorship on their side. And well they may
"be; to see, as is frequently the case, the blessed
"truths of the gospel degraded, by being associ-
"ated with newspaper bombast, with impudence,
"with invective, with dotage, with drivelling cant,
"with buffoonery, and scurrility! Who can read
"these despicable publications, without thinking
"contemptuously of all who abet them? But let
"not every one, in whom an occasional coinci-
"dence of opinion may be recognised, be included
"in this number. For it is a certain truth, that
"the writings of avowed infidels are not more
"offensive to several of the clergy in question,
"than are some of the publications here alluded
"to. Let them not, therefore, be judged of by
"that which they condemn; by productions which
"they consider as an abuse of the liberty of the
"press, and a disgrace to the cause which their
"authors profess to serve."—P. 179.

Whoever remembers that the most learned interpreter of prophecy now living ranks with the evangelical clergy, whoever recalls to his recollection the names of Scott, Robinson, Gisborne, and a multitude of others of the same description, will not easily be induced to form a contemptuous opinion of their literary talents, or to suspect them of being a whit behind the rest of the clergy in mental cultivation or intellectual vigour. In a

subsequent edition, the author has explained his meaning, by restricting the censure to all who have ranged themselves *on the side* of the clergy under consideration. But as far as the most explicit avowal of the same tenets can indicate any thing, have not each of the respectable persons before mentioned ranged themselves on their side? Or if he will insist upon limiting the phrase to such as have defended them in controversy, what will he say of Overton, whose work, for a luminous statement of facts, an accurate arrangement of multifarious articles, and a close deduction of proofs, would do honour to the first polemic of the age? In affecting a contempt of this most able writer, he has contradicted himself, having, in another part of this work, borne a reluctant testimony to his talents. He closes his animadversions on the clergy usually styled evangelical, with the following important concessions:—

"We are ready to own, though there have been "a few instances to the contrary, that the moral "conduct of the men in question is consistent with "their calling; and that though the faults above "detailed are found among them, yet that, as a "body, they are more than free from immorali-"ties."—P. 162.

The men to whom their accuser ascribes an assemblage of virtues, so rare and so important, must unquestionably be "the excellent of the earth," and deserve a very different treatment from what they have received at his hands.

Before we put a final period to this article, we must beg the reader's patience to a few remarks on the general tendency of the work under examination.

For the freedom of censure the author has assumed, he cannot plead the privilege of reproof. He has violated every law by which it is regulated. In administering reproof, we are not wont to call in a third party, least of all the party to whom the persons reproved are directly opposed. Besides, if reproof is intended to have any effect, it must be accompanied with the indications of a friendly mind; since none ever succeeded in reclaiming the person he did not appear to love. The spirit this writer displays toward the objects of his censure, is decidedly hostile; no expressions of esteem, no attempt to conciliate; all is rudeness, asperity, and contempt. He tells us in his preface, "It is difficult to find an apology for disrespectful language under any circumstances: if it can be at all excused, it is when he who utters lets us know from whence it comes; but he who dares to use it, and yet dares not to put his name to the abuse, gives us reason to conclude that his cowardice is equal to his insolence." (Pref. p. iv.) In violation of his own canon, he seems to have assumed a disguise for the very purpose of giving an unbridled indulgence to the insolence he condemns.

If we consider him in the light of a public Censor, he will appear to have equally neglected the proprieties of that character. He who under-

takes that office ought, in all reason, to direct his chief attention to vice and impiety; which, as the common foes of human nature, give every one the privilege of attack: but, though his subject naturally led him to it, we find little or nothing of the kind. In his eagerness to expose the aberrations of goodness, the most deadly sins, and the most destructive errors, are scarcely noticed. In surveying the state of morals, the eccentricities of a pious zeal, a hairbreadth deviation from ecclesiastical etiquette, a momentary feeling of tenderness towards dissenters, are the things which excite his indignation; while the secularity, the indolence, the ambition, and dissipation, too prevalent in the church, almost escape his observation. We do not mean to assert, that it is always improper to animadvert on the errors and mistakes of good men; we are convinced of the contrary. But, whenever it is attempted, it ought to be accompanied with such expressions of tenderness and esteem, as shall mark our sense of their superiority to persons of an opposite description. In the moral delineations with which the New Testament abounds, when the imperfections of christians are faithfully reprehended, we are never tempted to lose sight of the infinite disparity betwixt the friends and the enemies of the gospel. Our reverence for good men is not impaired by contemplating their infirmities: while those who are strangers to vital religion, with whatever amiable qualities they may be invested, appear objects of

pity. The impression made by the present performance is just the reverse. The character of the unquestionably good is placed in so invidious a light on the one hand, and the bad qualities of their opponents so artfully disguised and extenuated on the other, that the reader feels himself at a loss which to prefer. Its obvious tendency is to obliterate every distinctive mark and characteristic by which genuine religion is ascertained.

The writer of this work cannot have intended the reformation of the party on which he has animadverted; for, independently of his having, by the rudeness of his attack, forfeited every claim to their esteem, he has so conducted it, that there is not one in fifty guilty of the faults he has laid to their charge. Instead of being induced to alter their conduct, they can only feel for him those sentiments which unfounded calumny is apt to inspire. The very persons to whom his censures apply, will be more likely to feel their resentment rise at the bitterness and rancour which accompanies them, than to profit by his admonitions.

As we are fully convinced that the controversy agitated between the evangelical party and their opponents, involves the essential interests of the gospel, and whatever renders christianity worth contending for, we cannot but look with jealousy on the person who offers himself as an umpire; especially when we perceive a leaning towards the party which we consider in the wrong. This partiality may be traced almost through every page

of the present work. Were we to look only to speculative points, we might be tempted to think otherwise. It is not, however, in the cool, argumentative parts of a work, that the bias of an author is so much to be perceived, as in the declamatory parts, when he gives a freer scope to his feelings. It is in the choice of the epithets applied to the respective parties, in the expression of contemptuous or respectful feeling, in the solicitude apparent to please the one, combined with his carelessness of offending the other, that he betrays the state of his heart. Judged by this criterion, this author must be pronounced an *enemy* to the evangelical party. We hope this unnatural alienation from the servants of Christ will not prove contagious, or it will soon completely overthrow that reformation which the established church has experienced within the last fifty years.

When Samson was brought into the house of Dagon to make sport for the Philistines, it was by the Philistines themselves: had it been done by an Israelite, it would have betrayed a blindness much more deplorable than that of Samson. Great as were the irregularities and disorders which deformed the church at Corinth, and severely as they were reprehended, it is easy to conceive, but impossible to express, the indignation Paul would have felt, had a christian held up those disorders to the view and the derision of the heathen world. It is well known that the conduct of Luther, of

Carlostadt, and of many other reformers, furnished matter of merited censure, and even of plausible invective; but he who had employed himself in emblazoning and magnifying their faults, would have been deemed a foe to the Reformation. Aware that it will be replied to this, the cases are different, and neither the truth of christianity nor the doctrines of the Reformation are involved in the issue of the present controversy; we answer, without hesitation, that the controversy now on foot *does* involve nearly all that renders it important for christianity to be true, and most precisely the doctrines of the Reformation, to which the papists are not more inimical (in some points they are less so) than the opponents of the evangelical clergy. It is the old enmity to the gospel, under a new form; an enmity as deadly and inveterate as that which animated the breast of Porphyry or of Julian.

The impression of character on the public mind is closely connected with that of principles; so that, in the mixed questions more especially which regard religion and morals, it is vain to expect men will condescend to be instructed by those whom they are taught to despise. Let it be generally supposed that the patrons of orthodox piety are weak, ignorant, and enthusiastic, despicable as a body, with the exception of a few individuals; after being inured to such representations from their enemies, let the public be told this by one who was formerly their friend and

associate,—and is it possible to conceive a circumstance more calculated to obstruct the efficacy of their principles? Will the prejudices of an irreligious world against the gospel be mitigated, by being inspired with contempt for its abettors? Will it be won to the love of piety, by being schooled in the scorn and derision of its most serious professors?

We can readily suppose, that, stung with the reproaches cast upon his party, he is weary of bearing the cross: if this be the case, let him at once renounce his principles, and not attempt, by mean concessions and a temporizing policy, to form an impracticable coalition betwixt the world and the church. We apprehend the ground he has taken is untenable, and that he will be likely to please neither party. By the friends of the gospel he will be in danger of being shunned as an "accuser of the brethren;" while his new associates regard him with the contempt due to a sycophant.

It must give the enlightened friends of religion concern, to witness a spirit gaining ground amongst us, which, to speak of it in the most favourable terms, is calculated to sow the seeds of discord. The vivid attention to moral discrimination, the vigilance which seizes on what is deemed reprehensible, is unhappily turned to the supposed failings of good men, much to the satisfaction, no doubt, of an ungodly world. The practice of caricaturing the most illustrious men has grown

fashionable amongst us. With grief and indignation we lately witnessed an attempt of this kind on the character of Mr. Whitfield, made, if our information be correct, by the present author; in which every shade of imperfection, which tradition can supply, or ingenuity surmise, is industriously brought forward for the purpose of sinking him in public estimation. Did it accomplish the object intended by it? It certainly did not. While the prejudice entertained against Whitfield, by the enemies of religion, was already too violent to admit of increase, its friends were perfectly astonished at the littleness of soul, and the callousness to every kind feeling, which could delight in mangling such a character. It was his misfortune to mingle freely with different denominations, to preach in unconsecrated places, and convert souls at uncanonical hours:—whether he acted right or wrong in these particulars, it is not our province to inquire. That he approved himself to his own conscience, there is not the least room to doubt. Admitting his conduct, in the instances alluded to, to have been inconsistent with his clerical engagements, let it be temperately censured; but let it not efface from our recollection the patient self-denial, the unextinguishable ardour, the incredible labours, and the unexampled success, of that extraordinary man. The most zealous votaries of the church need be under no apprehension of her being often disgraced by producing such a man as Mr. Whitfield. *Nil admirari*, is an excellent

maxim, when applied, as Horace intended it, to the goods of fortune: when extended to a character, nothing can be more injurious. A sensibility to the impression of great virtues bordering on enthusiasm, accompanied with a generous oblivion of the little imperfections with which they are joined, is one of the surest prognostics of excellence.

> "Verum, ubi plura nitent—non ego paucis
> Offendar maculis, quas aut incuria fudit,
> Aut humana parum cavit natura—"

The modern restorers of the piety of the church of England were eminent for their godly simplicity and fidelity. Sincerely attached, as it became them, to the establishment of which they were ministers, their spirit was too enlarged, too ardent, too disinterested, to suffer them to become the tools of a party, or to confound the interests of christianity with those of any external communion. From their being looked upon as innovators, as well as from the paucity of their numbers, they were called to endure a much severer trial than falls to the lot of their successors. They bore the burden and heat of the day: they laboured, and others have entered into their labours. We feel, with respect to the greater part of those who succeed them, a confidence that they will continue to tread in their steps. But we cannot dissemble our concern at perceiving a set of men rising up among them, ambitious of new modelling the party, who, if they have too much virtue openly

to renounce their principles, yet have too little firmness to endure the consequences: timid, temporizing spirits, who would refine into insipidity, polish into weakness, and, under we know not what pretences of regularity, moderation, and a care not to offend, rob it utterly of that energy of character to which it owes its success. If they learn, from this and other writers of a similar description, to insult their brethren, fawn upon their enemies, and abuse their defenders, they will soon be frittered to pieces; they will become, "like other men," feeble, enervated, and shorn of their strength. We would adjure them to be on their guard against the machinations of this new sect. We cannot suspect them of the meanness of submitting to be drilled by their enemies, whom they are invited to approach in the attitude of culprits, beseeching them (in our author's phrase) to "inquire whether there may not be some found "among them of unexceptionable character"! We trust they will treat such a suggestion with ineffable contempt.

After the taste our readers have had of this writer's spirit, they will not be surprised at his entire disapprobation of Mr. Overton's work. The discordance of sentiment must be great betwixt him who wishes to betray, and him whose aim is to defend. Mr. Overton, in behalf of his brethren, boldly appeals from their accusers to the public. This writer crouches to those very accusers, approaches them in a supplicating tone, and, as

the price of peace, offers the heads of his brethren in a charger. Overton, by a copious detail of facts, and by a series of irrefragable arguments, establishes their innocence: this writer assents to their condemnation, entreating only that execution may be respited till an inquiry is made into the degrees of delinquency. The author of The True Churchman ascertained, clothes himself with the light of truth: the author of Zeal without Innovation hides himself in the thickest gloom of equivocation.

Before we close this article, we must entreat our reader's patience, while we make one observation relating to the permanence of the ecclesiastical establishment. It is possible the dignitaries of the church may be at a loss to decide whether the services of the evangelical class shall be accepted or rejected; but we are persuaded the people will feel no difficulty in determining whether or not to continue their attendance at the places from whence they are banished. Teachers of the opposite description have already lost their hold on the public mind; and they will lose it more and more. Should the secession from the established church become so general, as that its services are no longer the objects of popular suffrage, it will be deprived of its firmest support. For the author of the Alliance acknowledges that the compact betwixt church and state, which he allows to be a virtual rather than a formal one, rests mainly upon the circumstance of the established religion being that of the

majority, without which it becomes incapable of rendering those services to the state, for the sake of which its privileges and emoluments were conferred. Nothing but an extreme infatuation can accelerate such an event. But if pious and orthodox men be prevented from entering into the church, or compelled to retire from it, the people will retire with them; and the apprehension of the church being in danger, which has so often been the watchword of party, will become, for once, well founded.

REVIEW

OF

GISBORNE'S SERMONS.

Sermons, principally designed to illustrate and to enforce Christian Morality. By the Rev. T. Gisborne, A. M. 8vo. pp. 430. 1809.

We have read these sermons with so much satisfaction, that, were it in our power to aid their circulation by any testimony of our approbation, we should be almost at a loss for terms sufficiently strong and emphatic. Though the excellent author is possessed already of a large share of the public esteem, we are persuaded these discourses will make a great accession to his celebrity. Less distinguished by any predominant quality than by an assemblage of the chief excellencies in pulpit composition, they turn on subjects not very commonly handled, and discuss them with a copiousness, delicacy, and force, which evince the powers of a master. They are almost entirely upon moral subjects, yet equally remote from the superficiality and dryness with which these subjects are too often treated. The morality of Mr. Gisborne is arrayed in all the majesty of truth and all the beauties of

holiness. In perusing these sermons, the reader is continually reminded of real life, and beholds human nature under its most unsophisticated aspect, without ever being tempted to suppose himself in the schools of pagan philosophy. We cannot better explain the professed scope and object of the author than by copying a few sentences from his preface.

" Of late years it has been loudly asserted, that, " among clergymen who have shewed themselves " very earnest in doctrinal points, adequate regard " has not been evinced to moral instruction. The " charge has perhaps been urged with the greatest " vehemence by persons who have employed little " trouble in examining into its truth. In many " cases it has been groundless, in many, exagge- " rated. In some instances there has been reason, " I fear, for a degree of complaint; and in more, " a colourable pretext for the imputation. I believe " that some preachers, shocked on beholding ex- " amples, real or supposed, of congregations starv- " ing on mere morality, substituted for the bread " of life; eager to lay broad and deep the founda- " tions of the gospel, and ultimately apprehensive " lest their own hearers should suspect them of " reverting towards *legality*, have not given to " morals, as fruits of faith, the station and the " amplitude to which they have a scriptural claim. " Anxious lest others should mistake, or lest they " should themselves be deemed to mistake, the " branch for the root; not satisfied with proclaim- " ing to the branch, as they were bound habitually

" to proclaim, *Thou bearest not the root, but the root*
" *thee,* they have shrunk from the needful office of
" tracing the ramifications. They have not left
" morality out of their discourses, but they have
" kept it too much in the back-ground. They have
" noticed it shortly, generally, incidentally; in a
" manner which, while perhaps they were eminent
" as private patterns of moral duties, might not
" sufficiently guard an unwary hearer against a
" reduced estimate of practical holiness, nor exempt
" themselves from the suspicion of undervaluing
" moral obedience." Pref. pp. vii. viii.

To the truth of these remarks we cordially assent, as they point to a defect in the ministration of some excellent men, which the judicious part of the public have long lamented, and which Mr. Gisborne, in his present work, has taught his contemporaries how to remedy. Extremes naturally lead to each other. The peculiar doctrines of the gospel had been so long neglected by the most celebrated preachers, and the pernicious consequences of that neglect, in wearing out every trace of genuine religion, had been so deeply felt, that it is not to be wondered at if the first attempts to correct the evil were accompanied with a tendency to the contrary extreme. In many situations, those who attempted to revive doctrines which had long been considered as obsolete, found themselves much in the same circumstances as missionaries, having intelligence to impart before unknown, and exposed to all the contempt and obloquy which assailed the

first preachers of christianity. While they were engaged in such an undertaking, it is not at all surprising that they confined their attention almost entirely to the doctrines peculiar to the christian religion, with less care to inculcate and display the moral precepts which it includes in common with other systems than their intrinsic importance demanded. They were too much occupied in removing the rubbish and laying the foundations, to permit them to carry their superstructure very high. They insisted, in general terms, on the performance of moral duties; urged the necessity of that holiness without which "none shall see the Lord;" and, by a forcible application of truth to the conscience, produced in many instances the most surprising, as well as the most happy, effects. But still, in consequence of limiting their ministry too much to the first elements of the gospel, and dwelling chiefly on topics calculated to alarm the careless and console the faithful, a wrong taste began to prevail amongst their hearers—a disrelish of moral discussions, a propensity to contemplate christianity under one aspect alone,—that of a system of relief for the guilty, instead of a continual discipline of the heart. Those wished for stimulants and cordials, whose situation required alteratives and correctives. Preachers and hearers have a reciprocal influence on each other; and the fear of being reproached as "*legal*," deterred some good men from insisting so much on moral and practical subjects as their own good sense would have dictated. By this means the

malady became more inveterate, till the inherent corruption of human nature converted the doctrine of the gospel, in a greater or less degree, into the leaven of antinomianism. An error, which at first appeared trivial, at length proved serious; and thus it came to pass that the fabric of sacred truth was almost universally reared in such a manner as to deviate sensibly from the primitive model.

When we look at christianity in the New Testament, we see a set of discoveries, promises, and precepts, adapted to influence the whole character: it presents an object of incessant solicitude, in the pursuit of which new efforts are to be exerted, and new victories accomplished, in a continued course of well-doing, till we reach the heavenly mansions. There is scarce a spring in the human frame and constitution it is not calculated to touch, nor any portion of human agency which is exempted from its control. Its resources are inexhaustible; and the considerations by which it challenges attention embrace whatever is most awful or alluring in the whole range of possible existence. Instead of being allowed to repose on his past attainments, or to flatter himself with the hope of success without the exercise of diligence and watchfulness, the christian is commanded to work out his salvation with fear and trembling. In the *actual* exhibition of religion, the solicitude of serious minds has been made to turn too much on a particular crisis, which has been presented in a manner so insulated, that nothing in the order of means seemed instrumental

to its production. In short, things have been represented in such a manner as was too apt to produce despondency before conversion, and presumption after it.

It must be allowed, the judicious management of practical subjects is more difficult than the discussion of doctrinal points; which may also account, in part, for the prevalence of the evil we are now speaking of. In treating a point of doctrine, the habit of belief almost supersedes the necessity of proof: the mind of the hearer is usually preoccupied in favour of the conclusions to be established; nor is much address or ingenuity necessary to conduct him in a path in which he has long been accustomed to tread. The materials are prepared to the preacher's hands; a set of texts, with their received interpretations, stand ready for his use; the compass of thought which is required is very limited; and this little circle has been beaten so often, that an ordinary understanding moves through it with mechanical facility. To discuss a doctrinal position to the satisfaction of a common audience requires the smallest possible exertion of intellect. The tritest arguments are, in fact, the best: the most powerful considerations to enforce assent are rendered, by that very quality, the most conspicuous, as the sun announces himself by his superior splendour. In delineating the duties of life the task is very different. To render these topics interesting, it is necessary to look abroad, to contemplate the principles of human nature, and the

diversified modes of human feeling and action. The preacher has not to do with a few rigid and unbending propositions: he is to contemplate and portray a real state of things—a state which is continually changing its aspect, while it preserves its essential character, and the particulars of which mock the powers of enumeration. If he does not think with great originality, he must at least think for himself: he must use his own eyes, though he may report nothing but what has been observed before. As there lies an appeal, on these occasions, to the unbiassed good sense and observation of unlettered minds, the deficiencies of an injudicious instructor are sure to be detected. His principles will fail of interesting for want of exemplification, or his details will be devoid of dignity, and his delineations of human life disgust by their deviation from nature and from truth.

In points of casuistry, difficulties will occur which can only be solved and disentangled by nice discrimination, combined with extensive knowledge. The general precepts, for example, of justice and humanity, may be faithfully inculcated, and earnestly insisted on, without affording a ray of useful direction to a doubting conscience. While all men acknowledge the indispensable obligation of these precepts, it is not always easy to discover what is the precise line of action they enforce. In the application of general rules to particular cases of conduct, many relations must be surveyed, opposing claims must be reconciled and adjusted, and the

comparative value of different species of virtue established upon just and solid principles.

These difficulties have been evaded, rather than overcome, by the greater part of moralizing preachers; who have contented themselves with retailing extracts from the works of their celebrated predecessors, or with throwing together a few loose and undigested thoughts on a moral duty, without order and arrangement, or the smallest effort to impress its obligation upon the conscience, or to deduce it from its proper sources. To the total want of unction, to the cold, pagan, anti-christian cast of these compositions, joined to their extreme superficiality, must be ascribed, in a great measure, the disgust which many serious minds have contracted against the introduction of moral topics into the pulpit. Our readers will not suspect we mean to apply this censure indiscriminately, or that we are insensible to the extraordinary merits of a Barrow or of a Tillotson, who have cultivated christian morals with so universal an applause of the English public. We admire, as much as it is possible for our readers to admire, the rich invention, the masculine sense, the exuberantly copious, yet precise and energetic diction, which distinguish the first of these writers, who, by a rare felicity of genius, united in himself the most distinguishing qualities of the mathematician and of the orator. We are astonished at perceiving, in the same person, and in the same composition, the close logic of Aristotle combined with the

amplifying powers of Plato. The candour, the good sense, the natural arrangement, the unpremeditated graces of Tillotson, if they excite less admiration, give us almost equal pleasure. It is, indeed, the peculiar boast of the English nation, to have produced a set of divines, who, being equally acquainted with classical antiquity and inspired writ, and capable of joining, to the deepest results of unassisted reason, the advantages of a superior illumination, have delivered down to posterity a body of moral instruction more pure, copious, and exact, than subsists amongst any other people; and had they appealed more frequently to the peculiar principles of the gospel, had they infused a more evangelical spirit into their discourses, instead of representing christianity too much as a mere code of morals, they would have left us nothing to wish or to regret. Their decision of moral questions was for the most part unquestionably just; but they contemplated moral duties too much apart, neglecting to blend them sufficiently with the motives and principles of pure revelation, after the manner of the inspired writers; and supposing them to believe, they forgot to inculcate, the fundamental truth—that "*by the deeds of the law no flesh living shall be justified.*" Those internal dispositions, whence right conduct can alone flow, were too little insisted on; the agency of the Spirit was not sufficiently honoured or acknowledged; and the subordination of the duties of the second to those of the first table not enough

kept in view. The virtues they recommended and enforced were too often considered as the native growth of the human heart, instead of being represented as "*fruits of the Spirit.*" Jesus Christ was not laid as the foundation of morality; and a very sparing use was made of the motives to its practice deduced from his promises, his example, and his sacrifice. Add to this, that the labours of these great men were employed almost entirely in illustrating and enforcing the obligation of particular duties, while the doctrine of the cross engaged little of their attention, except so far as it was impugned by the objections of infidels, or mutilated by the sophistry of papists. From the perusal of their writings, the impression naturally results, that a belief of the evidences of revealed religion, joined to a correct deportment in social life, is adequate to all the demands of christianity. For these reasons, much as we admire, we cannot recommend them in an unqualified manner, nor consider them as safe guides in religion.

By these remarks, we intend no offence to any class of christians. That the celebrated authors we have mentioned, with others of a similar stamp, have refined the style and improved the taste of the English pulpit, while they have poured a copious stream of knowledge on the public mind, we are as ready to acknowledge as their warmest admirers; but we will not disguise our conviction, that, for the just delineation of the "truth as it is in Jesus," we must look to the Baxters, the Howes, and the

Ushers of an earlier period. He who wishes to catch the flame of devotion by listening to the words "which are spirit and are life," will have recourse to the writings of the latter, notwithstanding their intricacy of method and prolixity of style.

It is with peculiar satisfaction we call the attention of our readers to a work which unites, in a considerable degree, the excellencies of each class of divines alluded to, without their defects. The discourses are on the following subjects: Our Lord Jesus Christ the Foundation of Morality; on the Evils resulting from false Principles of Morality; on the Changes produced, by the Coming of Christ, in the Situation of Men as to the Divine Law; Justification not attainable by Acts of Morality; on Living after the Flesh or after the Spirit; the Love of God an Inducement to strict Morality; on Brotherly Love; on the Love of Money; on the Sacrifice of Worldly Interest to Duty; on Christian Bounty; on Discontent; on Worldly Anxiety; on Christian Obedience to Civil Rulers; Christian Patriotism illustrated by the Character of Nehemiah; on quiet Diligence in our Proper Concerns; on Partiality; on Suspicion; on doing Evil to produce Good; on the Superiority of Moral Conduct required of Christians. The reader will perceive it was not the author's design to make a systematic arrangement of christian duties, and that there are many vices and virtues not comprehended within the plan of his present work. In the discussion of the subjects which he has selected, he has evinced

much observation of human life, a deep insight into the true principles of morals, and an intimate acquaintance with the genius of the christian religion. He has erected his edifice upon a solid basis; in the choice of his materials, he has carefully excluded the wood, hay, and stubble, and admitted no ornaments but such as are fitted to grace the temple of God.

The intelligent reader will discover, in these discourses, the advantage resulting from studying morality as a science. It will yield him great satisfaction to find the writer ascending on all occasions to first principles, forming his decision on comprehensive views, separating what is specious from what is solid, and enforcing morality by no motives which are suspicious or equivocal. He will not see vanity or ambition pressed into the service of virtue, or any approach to the adoption of that dangerous policy which proposes to expel one vice by encouraging another. He will meet with no flattering encomiums on the purity and dignity of our nature, none of those appeals to the innate goodness of the human heart, which are either utterly ineffectual, or, if they restrain from open profligacy, diffuse, at the same time, the more subtle poison of pride and self-righteousness. Mr. Gisborne never confounds the functions of morality with the offices of the Saviour, nor ascribes to human virtue, polluted and imperfect at best, any part of those transcendent effects which the New Testament teaches us to impute to the mediation of Christ. He considers

the whole compass of moral duties as branches of religion, as prescribed by the will of God, and no farther acceptable to him than as they proceed from religious motives.

The disposition in mankind to seek justification by the works of the law, has been so much flattered and encouraged by the light in which moral duties have been usually placed, that Mr. Gisborne has shewn his judgement by counteracting this error at the outset. We recommend to the serious attention of our readers, with this view, the fourth sermon, on Justification not attainable by Acts of Morality. We have never seen a publication in which that important argument is set in a more clear and convincing light.

Though Mr. Gisborne for a series of years has distinguished himself as the able opponent of the doctrine of expediency, yet on no occasion has he exerted more ability in this cause than in his present work. We recommend it to the thinking part of the public to forget for a moment that they are reading a sermon, and conceive themselves attending to the arguments of a sober and enlightened philosopher. To purify the sources of morals, and to detect the principles of a theory, which enables us to err by system and be depraved by rule, is to do good of the highest sort; as he who diminishes the mass of human calamity by striking one from the list of diseases, is a greater benefactor to mankind than the physician who performs the greatest number of cures. It

is in this light we look upon the labours of the present author; to whom we are more indebted than to any other individual for discrediting a doctrine, which threatens to annihilate religion, to loosen the foundation of morals, and to debase the character of the nation. We recommend to universal perusal the admirable discourse, on the Evils resulting from false Principles of Morality.

The two discourses which propose to illustrate the Character of Nehemiah contain the most valuable instruction, adapted, in particular, to the use of those who occupy the higher ranks, or who possess stations of commanding influence and authority. They evince just and enlarged views of the duties attached to elevated situations, and breathe the purest spirit of christian benevolence. The Sermon on the Love of Money displays, perhaps, most of the powers of the orator, and demonstrates in how masterly a manner the author is capable, when he pleases, of enforcing "the terrors of the Lord." It contains some awful passages, in which, by a kind of repeated asseveration of the same truth, and the happy reiteration of the same words, an effect is produced resembling that of repeated claps of thunder. We shall present our readers with the following specimen.

"Fourthly. Meditate on the final condition to "which the lover of money is hastening. The "*covetous*, the man who is under the dominion of "the love of money, 'shall not inherit the king-"dom of God.' In the present life he has a

"foretaste of the fruits of his sin. He is restless, "anxious, dissatisfied: at one time harassed by "uncertainty as to the probable result of his pro- "jects; at another, soured by the failure of them; "at another, disappointed in the midst of success, "by discerning, too late, that the same exertions "employed in some other line of advantage would "have been more productive. But suppose him "to have been, through life, as free from the "effects of these sources of vexation as the most "favourable picture could represent him, 'he "shall not inherit the kingdom of God.' He may "not have been a miser; but he was a lover of "money. He may not have been an extortioner; "but he was a lover of money. He may not have "been fraudulent; but he was a lover of money. "'He shall not inherit the kingdom of God.' He "has had his day and his object. He has sought, "and he may have accumulated, earthly posses- "sions. By their instrumentality he may have "gratified many other appetites and desires. But "he did not seek first the kingdom of God; there- "fore he shall not obtain it. He 'loved the "world;' therefore he 'shall perish with the world.' "He has wilfully bartered his soul for money. In "vain is he now aghast at his former madness. "In vain does he now detest the idol which he "worshipped. The gate of salvation is closed "against him. He inherits the bitterness of un- "availing remorse, the horrors of eternal death."— Pp. 145, 146.

If we were called to specify the discourse in the present volume that appeared to us the most ingenious and original, we should be inclined to point to the eighteenth, on Suspicion.

Having expressed our warm approbation of this performance, justice compels us to notice what appear to us its principal blemishes; which, however, are so overbalanced by the merit of the whole, that we should scarcely deem them worthy of remark, were it not requisite to vindicate our claim to impartiality. Against the sentiments or the arrangement of these discourses we have nothing to object: the former are almost invariably just and important, often striking and original; the latter is natural and easy, preserving the *spirit* of method even where it may seem to neglect the form; equally remote from the looseness of an harangue, and the ostentation of logical exactness. With the style of this work we cannot say that we are quite so much satisfied. Perspicuous, dignified, and correct, it yet wants something more of amenity, variety, and ease. Instead of that flexibility which bends to accommodate itself to the different conceptions which occur, it preserves a sort of uniform stateliness. The art of transposition, carried, in our opinion, to excess, together with the preference of learned to plain Saxon words, give it an air of Latinity, which must necessarily render it less intelligible and acceptable to unlettered minds. It is, indeed, but fair to remark, that the discourses appear to have been

chiefly designed for the use of the higher classes. But while we allow this apology its just weight, we are still of opinion that the composition might have assumed a more easy and natural air, without losing any thing of its force or beauty. Addresses from the pulpit should, in our apprehension, always make some approach to the character of being plain and popular.

Another blemish which strikes us in this work, is the frequent use of interrogations, introduced, not only in the warm and impassioned parts, where they are graceful, but in the midst of argumentative discussion. We have been struck with the prevalence of this practice in the more recent works of clergymen, beyond those of any other order of men. With Demosthenes, we know interrogation was a very favourite figure; but we recollect, at the same time, it was chiefly confined to the more vehement parts of his speeches, in which, like the eruptions of a furnace, he broke out upon, and consumed his opponents. In him it was the natural expression of triumphant indignation: after he had subdued and laid them prostrate by the force of his arguments, by his abrupt and terrible interrogations he trampled them in the mire. In calm and dispassionate discussion, the frequent use of questions appears to us unnatural: it discomposes the attention by a sort of starting and irregular motion, and is a violation of dignity, by affecting to be lively where it is sufficient praise to be cogent and convincing. In

a word, when, instead of being used to give additional vehemence to a discourse, they are interspersed in a series of arguments, as an expedient for enlivening the attention and varying the style, they have an air of undignified flippancy. We should scarcely have noticed these little circumstances in an inferior work; but we could not satisfy ourselves to let them pass without observation in an author who, to merits of a more substantial nature, joins so many and such just pretensions to the character of a fine writer.

REVIEW

OF

GREGORY'S LETTERS.

Letters to a Friend on the Evidences, Doctrines, and Duties of the Christian Religion. By OLINTHUS GREGORY, LL. D. *of the Royal Military Academy, Woolwich.* 1812.

As this is a work of no ordinary merit, and written upon a subject which all must confess to be of the last importance, we shall endeavour, after being indulged with a few preliminary remarks, to give a pretty copious analysis of its contents; not doubting the greater part of our readers will be solicitous to avail themselves of the rich entertainment and instruction which its perusal will unquestionably afford. The first volume is employed in the discussion of a subject which has engaged the powers of the wisest of men through a series of ages; and minds of every size, and of every diversity of acquisition, having contributed their quota towards its elucidation, the accumulation of materials is such, that it has become more necessary, perhaps more difficult, to arrange than to invent. In the conduct of so extensive an argument, the talents of the writer will chiefly appear,

in giving the due degree of relief and prominence to the different branches of the subject,—in determining what should be placed in a strong and brilliant light, and what should be more slightly sketched,—and disposing the whole in such a manner as shall give it the most impressive effect. If there is little room for the display of invention, other powers are requisite, not less rare or less useful; a nice and discriminating judgement, a true logical taste, and a talent of extensive combination. An ordinary thinker feels himself lost in so wide a field; is incapable of classifying the objects it presents; and wastes his attention on such as are trite and common, instead of directing it to those which are great and interesting. If there are subjects which it is difficult to discuss for want of data to proceed upon,—and, while they allure by their appearance of abstract grandeur, are soon found to lose themselves in fruitless logomachies and unmeaning subtleties, such as the greater part of the discussions on time, space, and necessary existence,—there are others whose difficulty springs from an opposite cause, from the immense variety of distinct topics and considerations involved in their discussion, of which the divine origination of christianity is a striking specimen; which it has become difficult to treat as it ought to be treated, merely in consequence of the variety and superabundance of its proofs.

On this account, we suspect that this great cause has been not a little injured by the injudicious.

conduct of a certain class of preachers and writers, who, in just despair of being able to handle a single topic of religion to advantage, for want of having paid a devout attention to the Scriptures, fly like harpies to the evidences of christianity, on which they are certain of meeting with something prepared to their hands, which they can tear, and soil, and mangle at their pleasure.

Diripiuntque dapes, contactuque omnia fœdant.

The famine also, with which their prototypes in Virgil threatened the followers of Æneas, is not more dismal than that which prevails among their hearers and readers. The folly we are adverting to did not escape the observation nor the ridicule of Swift, who remarked in his days, that the practice of mooting, on every occasion, the question of the origin of christianity, was much more likely to unsettle the faith of the simple, than to counteract the progress of infidelity. It is dangerous to familiarize every promiscuous audience to consider religion as a thing which yet remains to be proved, to acquaint them with every sophism and cavil which a perverse and petulant ingenuity has found out, unaccompanied, as is too often the case, with a satisfactory answer; thus leaving the poison to operate, without the antidote, in minds which ought to be strongly imbued with the principles, and awed by the sanctions, of the gospel. It is degrading to the dignity of a revelation, established through a succession of ages by indubitable proofs,

to be adverting every moment to the hypothesis of its being an imposture, and to be inviting every insolent sophist to wrangle with us about the title, when we should be cultivating the possession. The practice we are now censuring is productive of another inconvenience. The argument of the truth of christianity being an argument of accumulation, or, in other words, of that nature, that the force of it results less from any separate consideration than from an almost infinite variety of circumstances, conspiring toward one point, and terminating in one conclusion; this concentration of evidence is broken to pieces when an attempt is made to present it in superficial descants; than which nothing can be conceived better calculated to make what is great appear little, and what is ponderous, light. The trite observation, that a cause is injured by the adoption of feeble arguments, rests on a basis not often considered, perhaps, by those who most readily assent to its truth. We never think of estimating the powers of the imagination on a given subject, by the actual performance of the poet; but if he disappoint us, we immediately ascribe his failure to the poverty of his genius, without accusing his subject or his art. The regions of fiction we naturally conceive to be boundless; but, when an attempt is made to convince us of the truth of a proposition respecting a matter of fact or a branch of morals, we take it for granted, that he who proposes it has made himself perfectly master of his argument; and that, as no consideration has been

neglected that would favour his opinion, we shall not err in taking our impression of the cause from the defence of its advocate. If that cause happen to be such as involves the dearest interests of mankind, we need not remark how much injury it is capable of sustaining from this quarter.

Let us not be supposed, by these remarks, to comprehend within our censure the writer, who, amidst the multifarious proofs of revelation, selects a single topic, with a view to its more elaborate discussion, provided it be of such a nature that it will support an independent train of thought; such, for example, as Paley has pursued in his Horæ Paulinæ, to which a peculiar value ought to be attached, as a clear addition to the body of christian evidences. All we mean to assert is, that it is incomparably better to be silent on the evidences of christianity, than to be perpetually adverting to them in a slight and superficial manner; and that a question so awful and momentous as that relating to the origin of the christian religion, ought not to be debased into a trivial commonplace. Let it be formally discussed, at proper intervals, by such men, and such only, as are capable of bringing to it the time, talents, and information, requisite to place it in a commanding attitude. That the author of the present performance is possessed of these qualifications to a very great degree, will sufficiently appear from the analysis we propose to give of the work, and the specimens we shall occasionally exhibit of its execution.

It is ushered in by a modest and dignified dedication to Colonel Mudge, lieutenant-governor of that royal military institution, of which the author is so distinguished an ornament. The whole is cast into the form of Letters to a Friend; and the first volume, we are given to understand, formed the subject of an actual correspondence. As much of the epistolary style is preserved as is consistent with the nature of a serious and protracted argument, without ill-judged attempts at refreshing the attention of the reader by strokes of gaiety and humour. The mind of the writer appears to have been too deeply impressed with his theme to admit of such excursions, the absence of which will not, we are persuaded, be felt or regretted.

Before he proceeds to state the direct proofs of the divinity of the christian religion, he shews, in a very striking manner, the absurdities which must of necessity be embraced by those who deny all pretences to revelation; enumerating, in the form of a creed, the various strange and untenable positions which form the subject of sceptical belief. In this part of the work, that disease in the intellectual temperament of infidels is placed in a stronger and juster light than we remember to have seen it, which may not improperly be denominated the credulity of unbelievers. This representation forms the contents of the first letter.

The necessity of revelation is still more indisputably evinced by an appeal to facts, and a survey of the opinions which prevailed among the most

enlightened heathens, respecting God, moral duty, and a future state. Under each of these heads, our author has selected, with great judgement, numerous instances of the flagrant and pernicious errors entertained by the most celebrated pagan legislators, poets, and philosophers; sufficient to demonstrate, beyond all contradiction, the inability of unassisted reason, in its most improved and perfect state, to conduct man to virtue and happiness, and the necessity, thence resulting, of superior aid. Much diligence of research, and much felicity of arrangement, are displayed in the management of this complicated topic, where the reader will find exhibited, in a condensed form, the most material facts adduced in Leland's voluminous work on this subject. All along, the author holds the balance with a firm and steady hand, without betraying a disposition either to depreciate the value of those discoveries and improvements to which reason really attained, or to charge the picture of its aberrations and defects with deeper shades than justly belong to it. The most eminent among the pagans themselves, it ought to be remembered, who, having no other resource, were best acquainted with its weakness and its power, never dreamed of denying the necessity of revelation: this they asserted in the most explicit terms; and on some occasions seem to have expected and anticipated the communication of such a benefit. We make no apology for citing, from the present work, the following remarkable passage out of Plato, tending both to

confirm the fact of a revelation being anticipated, and to evince, supposing nothing supernatural in the case, the profound sagacity of that great author. He says, "This just person (the inspired teacher of whom he had been speaking) must be poor, and void of all qualifications but those of virtue alone; that a wicked world would not bear his instructions and reproofs; and therefore, that within three or four years after he began to preach, he should be persecuted, imprisoned, scourged, and at last be put to death."*. In whatever light we consider it, this must be allowed to be a most remarkable passage; whether we regard it as merely the conjecture of a highly enlightened mind, or as the fruit of prophetic suggestion: nor are we aware of any absurdity in supposing that the prolific Spirit scattered, on certain occasions, some seeds of truth amidst that mass of corruption and darkness which oppressed the pagan world. The opinion we have ventured to advance, is asserted in the most positive terms, in several parts of Justin Martyr's Second Apology. Without pursuing this inquiry farther, we shall content ourselves with remarking, that, as the sufficiency of mere reason, as the guide to truth, never entered into the conception of pagans, so it could never have been thus adduced at all, but in consequence of confounding its results with the dictates of revelation, which, since its publication, has never ceased to modify the speculations, and aid the inquiries, of those who are least disposed to bow to

* De Republica, Lib. ii.

its authority. On all questions of morality and religion, the streams of thought have flowed through channels enriched with a celestial ore, whence they have derived the tincture to which they are indebted for their rarest and most salutary qualities.

Before we dismiss the subject, we would just observe, that the inefficacy of unassisted reason in religious concerns appears undeniably in two points: the doubtful manner in which the wisest pagans were accustomed to express themselves respecting a future state, the existence of which Warburton is confident none of the philosophers believed; and their proud reliance on their own virtue, which was such as left no room for repentance. Of a future state, Socrates, in the near prospect of death, is represented by Plato as expressing a hope, accompanied with the greatest uncertainty; and, with respect to the second point, the lofty confidence in their own virtue, which we have imputed to them, the language of Cicero, in one of his familiar letters, is awfully decisive: "Nec enim dum ero, angor ulla re, cum *omni curam culpa;* et si non ero, sensu omni carebo." "While I exist, I shall be troubled at nothing, since I have no fault whatever; and if I shall not exist, I shall be devoid of all feeling."* So true is it that life and immortality were brought to light by the Saviour; and that, until he appeared, the greatest of men were equally unacquainted with their present condition and their future prospects.

* Vol. I. p. 51.

The next Letter, which is the fourth in the series, is on mysteries in religion. Aware that, while the prejudice against whatever is mysterious subsists, the saving truths of the gospel can find no entrance, the author has taken great, and, as far as the force of argument can operate, successful pains, to point out the weakness of the foundations on which that prejudice rests. He has shewn, by a large induction of particulars, in natural religion, in natural philosophy, and in pure and mixed mathematics, that with respect to each of these sciences, we arrive, by infallible steps, at conclusions of which we can form no clear, determinate conceptions; and that the higher parts of mathematics especially, the science which glories in its superior light and demonstration, teem with mysteries as incomprehensible to the full as those which demand our assent in revelation. His skill as a mathematician, for which he has long been distinguished, serves him on this occasion to excellent purpose, by enabling him to illustrate his subject by well-selected examples from his favourite science; and by that means to prove, in the most satisfactory manner, that the mysterious parts of christianity are exactly analogous to the difficulties inseparable from other branches of knowledge, not excepting those which make the justest pretensions to demonstration. We run no hazard in affirming, that rarely, if ever have, superior philosophical attainments been turned to a better account, or a richer offering brought from the fields of science into the temple of God. Some of his illustrations, being

drawn from the sublimer speculations of mathematics, must necessarily be unintelligible to ordinary readers: but many of them are plain and popular; and he has succeeded in making the principle on which he reasons throughout perfectly plain and perspicuous, which is this—that we are able, in a multitude of instances, to ascertain the *relations* of things, while we know little or nothing of the *nature* of the things themselves. If the distinction itself is not entirely new, the force of argument with which it is supported, and the extent to which its illustration is carried, are such as evince much original thinking. We should seriously recommend this part of the work to the perusal of "the barrister,"* if he were capable of understanding it; and to all, without exception, who have been perverted by the shallow and ambiguous sophism, first broached, we believe, by Dr. Foster, that where mystery begins, religion ends; when the fact is, that religion and mystery both begin and end together, a portion of what is inscrutable to our faculties being intimately and inseparately blended with its most vital and operative truths. A religion without its mysteries, is a temple without its God.

Having thus marked out the ground, removed the rubbish and made room for the foundation, our author proceeds with the skill of a master to erect a firm and noble structure, conducting the argument for the truth of christianity through all its stages, and commencing his labours in this part

* An anonymous opposer of evangelical principles, who had then attained some celebrity, but is now quite forgotten. Ed.

of his subject with establishing the genuineness and authenticity of the sacred volume. As he manifestly aims at utility, not at display, we are glad to find he has availed himself of the profound and original reasoning of Hartley, which he has fortified all along with ingenious reflections of his own, and crowned by an appeal to the principal testimonies of christian and pagan antiquity. The Letter devoted to this subject is long, but not more so than the occasion demanded, and is replete with varied and extensive information. To the whole he has annexed a very accurate and particular account of the researches and discoveries of Dr. Buchanan, made during his visit to the Syrian churches in India; nor are we aware that there is a single consideration of moment, tending to confirm the genuineness and integrity of the Scriptures in their present state, which, in the course of our author's extended investigation, has escaped his notice. By some he will be blamed for placing the proofs of the authenticity of the sacred records before the argument from prophecy and miracles: but we think he is right in adopting such an arrangement; since the reasoning on this part not only stands independent of the sequel, but greatly abridges his subsequent labour, by enabling him to appeal on every occasion to the testimony of scripture, not indeed as inspired, but as an authentic document, that point having been previously established; while it is in perfect unison with that solicitude he everywhere evinces to imbue the mind of

his readers with a serious and devotional spirit. Here is a book of a singular character, and of high antiquity, from which christians profess to derive the whole of their information on religion; and it comes down to us under such circumstances, that every thing relating to it is capable of being investigated, apart from the consideration of prophecies and miracles, except its claim to inspiration. Why, then, should not the pretensions of this book be examined at the very outset, as far as they are susceptible of an independent examination; since the proof of its being genuine and authentic, will extend its consequences so far into the subsequent matter of discussion, as well as exert a great and salutary influence on the mind of the inquirer?

The next Letter is devoted to the subject of prophecy; in which, after noticing a few of the more remarkable predictions relating to the revolutions of power and empire, he descends to a more particular investigation of the prophecies relating to the Messiah, which he arranges under three heads: such as respect the time and place of his appearance; his character, doctrine, rejection, and final triumph; and the exact correspondence betwixt his contemptuous treatment and sufferings, and the representations of the ancient oracles. Under the last, he embraces the opportunity of rescuing the proof from the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah, from the cavils of the Jews, as well as from the insinuation of certain infidels, that the prophecy was written after the event;

which he triumphantly refutes by an appeal to a remarkable passage in the books of Origen against Celsus. In confirming the inference from prophecy, we again meet with a judicious application of the author's mathematical skill, by which he demonstrates, from the doctrine of chances, the almost infinite improbability of the occurrence of even a small number of contingent events predicted of any one individual; and the absolute impossibility, consequently, of accounting for the accomplishment of such numerous predictions as were accomplished in the person of the Messiah, without ascribing it to the power and wisdom of the Deity.

From the consideration of prophecy, he proceeds to the evidence of miracles, and the credibility of human testimony. He begins with stating, in few and simple terms, but with much precision, the just idea of a miracle, which, he remarks, has oftener been obscured than elucidated by definition; while the sentiments entertained by good men upon the subject have been almost uniformly correct, when they have not been entangled or heated by controversy. This branch of the evidences of revelation is certainly very little indebted to the introduction of subtle refinements. In resting the evidence of the Jewish and christian revelations on the ground of miracles, the author restricts his proposition to *uncontrolled miracles;* on the propriety of which, different judgements will probably be formed by his readers. We

believe him to be right: since, admitting the limitation to be unnecessary, it is but an extreme of caution, a leaning to the safe side; for who will deny that it is much easier to prove it to be inconsistent with the wisdom and goodness of the Deity, to permit an *uncontrolled* miracle to be performed in support of error, than to demonstrate, from a metaphysical consideration of the powers and capacities of spiritual agents of a high order, their incapacity of accomplishing what, to our apprehensions, must appear supernatural? The writer of this, at least, must confess for himself, he could never find any satisfaction in such speculations, not even in those of Farmer, ingenious as they are; which always appeared to him to be like advancing to an object by a circuitous and intricate path, rather than taking the nearest road. But to return to the present performance. After exhibiting the most approved answers to the flimsy sophistry of Hume, intended to evince the incredibility of miracles,—and corroborating them by a copious illustration of the four criteria of miraculous facts, suggested by Leslie, in his admirable work, entitled, A Short Method with the Deists,—he reduces the only suppositions which can be formed, respecting the miracles recorded in the New Testament, to the four following, which we shall give in the words of the author:—

"Either, first, the recorded accounts of those "miracles were absolute fictions, wickedly invented "by some who had a wish to impose upon mankind.

"Or, secondly, Jesus did not work any true "miracles; but the senses of the people were, in "some way or other, deluded, so that they believed "he really did perform miracles, when, in fact, he "did not.

"Or, thirdly, that the spectators were not in "any way deluded, but knew very well he wrought "no miracles; yet were all (both enemies and "friends, the Jews themselves not excepted, though "they daily 'sought occasion against him,') united "in a close confederacy, to persuade the world "he wrought the most surprising things. So that, "while some actively circulated reports of those "amazing occurrences, the rest kept their counsel, "never offering to unmask the fraud, but managing "the matter with so much dexterity and cunning, "and such an exact harmony and correspondence, "that the story of Jesus Christ's performing miracles "should become current, should obtain almost "universal credit, *and not a single person be able* "*to disprove it.*

"Or, fourthly, that he did actually perform "those astonishing works; and that the accounts "given of them by the christian writers in the "New Testament are authentic and correct.

"He that does not adopt the last of these "conclusions will find it a matter of very small "consequence which of the other three he chooses; "for that the stories cannot be *fictions*, is evident "from the reasonings of Leslie, already adduced; "and it will be seen farther, from a moment's

"consideration, that the denial of the miracles of "Jesus Christ, *in any way*, leads necessarily to "the admission of a series of real miracles of "another kind."

He closes this part of his disquisition with an elaborate confutation of the notion too generally admitted by the advocates of revelation, that the evidence of miraculous facts necessarily grows weaker in proportion to the distance of the time at which they were performed; and in no part does the vigour of his understanding appear to more advantage than in his reasonings on this point, where, among many excellent, we meet with the following profound remark:—

"It is only," he observes, "with regard to the "facts recorded in the Bible, that men ever talk "of the daily diminution of credibility. Who com- "plains of a decay of evidence in relation to the "actions of Alexander, Hannibal, Pompey, or "Cæsar? How many fewer of the events recorded "by Plutarch, or Polybius, or Livy, are believed "now, (on account of a diminution of evidence,) "than were believed by Mr. Addison, or Lord "Clarendon, or Geoffrey Chaucer? We never "hear persons wishing they had lived ages earlier, "that they might have had better proofs that "Cyrus was the conqueror of Babylon, that Darius "was beaten in several battles by Alexander, that "Titus destroyed Jerusalem, that Hannibal was "entirely routed by Scipio, or Pompey by Julius "Cæsar; though we sometimes find men of ardent

"and enterprising minds exclaiming, 'O that I "had lived and been present, when such splendid "events occurred, how lively an interest should "I have taken in such scenes, how much concern "in their termination!' And, indeed, it is the "frequent hearing of such exclamations that causes "men *to confound weight of evidence with warmth "or depth of feeling; and to lose sight of the "essential difference between real evidence, or the "true basis of belief in history, and the sensible im-"pression or influence which such history may make "upon the mind.*"

We have only to remark, before we dismiss this subject, that, whereas the evidence of facts which occurred at a distant period is usually placed under the head of *successive* evidence, this distinction, as applicable to the miracles of the gospel, must either be rejected altogether, or admitted with a caution against being misled by the ambiguous use of words. The evidence, in this case, is not to be confounded for a moment with that of a report transmitted through successive ages to the present time, since the record which contains the miraculous facts carries us back to the apostolic age; so that, admitting its antiquity to be what it pretends, of which there is the most satisfactory evidence, the only link in the succession is that which separates the performers or spectators of the miracles from their narrators, who in the case before us, however, are frequently the same persons.

In order to give that conspicuous place which is due to the greatest and most momentous of these miracles, as well as to do justice to the independent train of proofs by which it is supported, Dr. G. has assigned a separate Letter to the Resurrection of Christ, in which he has placed this great fact in the clearest light; and, to remove every shadow of hesitation arising from the minute variations in the account given of it by the evangelists, has taken the pains to digest from their separate narratives a distinct statement of the whole transaction, which, as far as we have had time to examine it, appears very satisfactory.

To this succeeds an ample illustration of the argument for the truth of christianity, drawn from its early and extensive propagation; where the fact is placed beyond all contradiction, by numerous and decisive testimonies, adduced from the ancient apologists and pagan writers. The dates of the ten successive persecutions are accurately assigned; and the most striking circumstances attending the last, in particular, are distinctly and forcibly exhibited. This forms the subject of the Ninth Letter, which closes with some admirable observations on the intrinsic excellence of the religion of Jesus, tending to shew that it corresponds to all the characters, and fulfils all the indications, which a revelation from heaven might be expected to possess.

The remaining Letters which compose this volume are employed in proving the inspiration

of the Scriptures, and answering various miscellaneous objections and cavils advanced against the Bible. Although we have already adduced some specimens of the author's style and composition, and shall have occasion to produce more in the course of our strictures on the second volume, yet we cannot deny ourselves the pleasure of laying before our readers the following highly beautiful and eloquent passage. Speaking of the analogy betwixt the difficulties offered in the sciences and the mysteries of religion, he observes—

"Philosophers, notwithstanding all these difficulties, recommend the cultivation and diffusion "of the sciences, because of their tendency to "sharpen the intellectual faculties of man, and "meliorate his condition in society. With how "much greater reason and earnestness, then, should "christians recommend the dissemination and "adoption of 'pure and undefiled religion,' considering its direct tendency to enlarge the understanding, and yet fill it with the contemplation "of Deity; to purify and harmonize the passions, to "refine the moral sense, to qualify and strengthen "for every function in life; to sustain under the "pressure of affliction, to afford consolation in "sickness, and enable us to triumph in death!

"What other science can even make a pretension to dethrone oppression, to abolish slavery, "to exclude war, to extirpate fraud, to banish "violence, to revive the withered blossoms of paradise? Such are the pretensions and blessings

"of genuine christianity; and wherever genuine "christianity prevails, they are experienced. Thus "it accomplishes its promises on earth, where "alone it has enemies; it will, therefore, accom- "plish them in heaven, where its friends reign. "Here, indeed, its advocate must be reduced to "silence; for how shall he display the meaning "of its *celestial* promises! How describe dignity "so vast, or picture glory so brilliant! How shall "language delineate what mind cannot imagine! "And where is that mind, among puny and ephe- "meral creatures, that can penetrate the thick "obscure; that can describe the light of perfect "knowledge, that can feel the glow of perfect "love, that can breathe the air of perfect happi- "ness?"—Vol. I. pp. 75, 76.

We proceed to notice the most important positions and reasonings contained in the second volume, which the author has devoted to a display of the doctrines and duties of christianity. We are aware that many will suspect him of a partial and bigoted attachment to his own opinions, in consequence of the anxiety he manifests to communicate and support those views of christianity, which, in his estimation, form its most striking peculiarity. It is plain our author considers the evidences of christianity as entirely subservient to its doctrines; and that he is consequently far from supposing, with some modern divines, that he has accomplished his work by proving that christianity is a true and a genuine revelation from

God. He judges it necessary to spend some time and some labour in considering *what it is* that is true, *what it is* that is revealed. Were we not familiar with the fact, we should be not a little surprised at the prevalence of a contrary persuasion; we should probably think it strange that such an anxiety should be evinced to rest the truth of christianity on the firmest possible basis, along with such a profound indifference to every attempt to investigate its import. Some wonderful charm, it seems, is contained in a bare avowal that christianity is a revelation from God, apart from any distinct perceptions of its truths, or any solemn advertence to its genuine scope and tendency. Embalmed and preserved, like some Egyptian monarch, in the form of a venerable and antiquated document, it is to be carefully kept, and always approached with respect, but never allowed to take its place among the living, nor supposed to be useful to mankind according to any known law of operation. The most magnificent appellations are applied to it: it is the light of the world, the true riches, the treasure hid in the field, and the pearl of great price. All these, and a thousand other encomiums, are lavished on the Scriptures, by men, who at the same time feel no scruple in insinuating that this boasted communication from heaven contains no truths beyond the limits of reason, and that what the bulk of christians in our age have deemed such, are the distempered visions of enthusiasm, if they are not,

in some instances, to be ascribed to the erroneous conceptions, entertained by the apostles, of the religion they were appointed to propagate. It is the *possession* of a revelation, not the *use*, which these men are accustomed to contemplate and to value. As the miser conceives himself rich by the treasure which he never employs, so the persons to whom we allude suppose themselves enlightened by a book from which they profess to derive no information, and saved by a religion which is allowed to engage little or none of their attention. This is one of the most distinguished features in the character of those, who with exemplary modesty style themselves *rational* christians. In this spirit, a distinguished prelate of the present age* has published a collection of tracts for the benefit of the junior clergy, in which not a single treatise is admitted, which professes to exhibit a view of christian doctrine; and has introduced it with a preface, ingeniously calculated, under pretence of decrying dogmas, to bring all such inquiries into contempt. It certainly is not difficult to perceive whence this manner of thinking proceeds, nor whither it tends. It proceeds from a rooted aversion to the genuine truths of revelation; and had it not received a timely check, would have terminated in the general prevalence of scepticism. It presents a neutral ground, on which professed christians and infidels may meet, and proceed to assail with their joint force the

* Bishop Watson.

substantial truth of our religion. There is nothing in such views of christianity to appal the infidel; nothing to mortify the pride, nothing to check or control the exorbitances, of that "carnal mind" which is "enmity against God." In stripping the religion of Christ of all that is spiritual, they render it weak and inefficacious as an instrument of renovating the mind; and, by fostering its pride and sparing its corruption, prepare it for shaking off the restraints of religion altogether. It gives us, however, unfeigned satisfaction to perceive, that the evil we so much deprecate appears to have met with a fatal check; and that the present times are distinguished by two things, which we cannot but consider as most favourable prognostics,—an increased attention to the peculiar doctrines of christianity, and a growing unanimity with respect to the modes in which those doctrines are entertained. There is less disposition on the one hand, to receive for christianity a system of pagan ethics, and on the other, to confound points of doubtful speculation with its fundamental doctrines. The religious zeal of the present day is more open and catholic than in former times, partaking less of the acrimony of party, and more of the inspiration of truth and charity. The line of demarcation betwixt sound doctrines and heresy is better ascertained than it has ever been before; and the christian world are equally averse from whatever approaches to socinian impiety, and from the mooting of interminable questions.

In the statements of the peculiar doctrines of christianity, there are two extremes to be avoided. The one is, that of pusillanimously shrinking from their bold originality, and attempting to recommend them to the acceptance of proud and worldly-minded men by the artifices of palliation and disguise; of which, in our opinion, the Bishop of Lincoln has given an egregious specimen in his late work.* The other extreme is that of stating them in a metaphysical form, mixing doubtful deductions with plain assertions, and thereby incumbering them with needless subtleties and refinements. We should neither be ashamed of the dictates of the Spirit, nor "add to his words, lest we be reproved." They will always appear with the most advantage, and carry the most conviction, when they are exhibited in their native simplicity, without being mixed with heterogeneous matter, or with positions of doubtful authority. In our apprehension, the true way of contemplating the peculiar doctrines of christianity, is to consider them as *facts* believed on the authority of the Supreme Being; not to be proved by reason, since their truth does not result from any perceptible relations in our ideas, but they owe their existence entirely to the will and counsel of the Almighty Potentate. On this account, we never consider it safe to rest their truth on a philosophical basis, nor imagine it is possible to add to their evidence by an elaborate train of reasoning. Let the fair grammatical

* Entitled, "A Refutation of Calvinism."

import of scripture language be investigated; and whatever propositions are, by an easy and natural interpretation, deducible from thence, let them be received as the dictates of infinite wisdom, whatever aspect they bear, or whatever difficulties they present. Repugnant to reason they never can be, because they spring from the Author of it; but superior to reason, whose limits they will infinitely surpass, we must expect to find them, since they are a communication of such matters of fact, respecting the spiritual and eternal world, as need not have been communicated, if the knowledge of them could have been acquired from any other quarter. The facts with which we have become acquainted in the natural world would appear stupendous, were they communicated merely on the evidence of testimony: they fail to astonish us, chiefly because they have been arrived at step by step, by means of their analogy to some preceding one. We have climbed the eminence by a slow progression, and our prospect has insensibly widened as we advanced, instead of being transported thither instantaneously by a superior power. Revelation conducts us to the truth at once, without previous training, without any intellectual process preceding, without condescending to afford other proof than what results from the veracity and wisdom of the Creator: and when we consider that this truth respects much sublimer relations and concerns than those which subsist in the material world,—that it regards the ways and counsels of

God respecting man's eternal destiny,—is it surprising it should embrace what greatly surpasses our previous conjectures, and even transcends our perfect comprehension? To a serious and upright mind, however, its discoveries are no sooner made, than they become supremely acceptable: the interposition of the Deity in the great moral drama is seen to be absolutely necessary; since none but infinite wisdom could clear up the intricacies, nor any power short of omnipotence relieve the distress produced. These very truths, which some ridicule as mysteries, and others despise as dogmas, are, to the enlightened, "sweeter than honey or the honeycomb;" apart from which, whatever else is contained in the Bible would be perfectly tasteless and insipid. Though he receives every communication from God with devout and grateful emotions, he feels no hesitation in confessing, that it is in these parts of revelation he especially exults and triumphs; it is these, which, in his estimation, entitle it to the appellation of "*marvellous light.*"

If it is no small gratification to find so perfect a concurrence in these sentiments, on the part of our author: to find them stated and illustrated in so able a manner as they are throughout this work, is a still greater. The first Letter in this volume is devoted to a general view of the christian doctrines, designed to obviate certain prejudices, and to prepare the mind for that serious inquiry into their nature and import, which cannot fail, under

the blessing of God, of conducting it to the most satisfactory conclusions.

Our author never loses sight of the gospel as a *restorative dispensation:* this is its primary and most essential feature; and the most dangerous and numerous aberrations from it, may be traced to the neglect of considering it in this light. It is not a prescription of a rule of life to the innocent, but the annunciation of a stupendous method of relief for the sinner. Overlooking all petty varieties, and subordinate distinctions, it places the whole human race on one level; abases them all in the dust before the Infinite Majesty; and offers, indiscriminately, a provision of sanctification to the polluted, and of pardon to the guilty. These are the glad tidings; this is the jubilee of the whole earth, proclaimed in the songs of angels, celebrated in the praises of the church, alike in her militant and her triumphant state—whether toiling in the vale of mortality, or rejoicing before the throne.

The second Letter in the series which composes this volume, is on the Depravity of Human Nature, where the reader will find the evidence of that melancholy but fundamental truth, exhibited with much conciseness, perspicuity, and force. The third is employed in stating the arguments for the atonement of Christ, under the four divisions of typical, prophetical, historical, and declaratory proofs; and the whole is closed by a very luminous and satisfactory answer to the most specious

objections against that momentous truth. In adverting to the objection to a vicarious sacrifice, founded on the notion of its being unjust that the innocent should be appointed to suffer in the room of the guilty, we meet with the following admirable passage of Archbishop Tillotson, remarkable for that perfect good sense, simplicity, and perspicuity, which distinguish the writings of that excellent prelate.

" 'If the matter,' says he, 'were searched to the " bottom, all this perverse contention about our " Saviour's suffering for our benefit, but not in " our stead, will signify just nothing. For if Christ " died for our benefit, so as, some way or other, *by* " *virtue of his death and sufferings,* to save us from " the wrath of God, and to procure our escape " from eternal death; this, for aught I know, is " all that any body means by his dying in our " stead. For he that dies with an intention to do " that benefit for another, or to *save him from* " *death,* doth certainly, to all intents and purposes, " die in his place and stead. And if they will " grant this to be their meaning, the controversy " is at an end, and both sides are agreed in the " thing, and do only differ in the phrase and man- " ner of expression; which is to seek a quarrel, and " an occasion of difference, when there is no real " ground for it—a thing which ought to be very " far from reasonable and peaceable minds. For " many of the socinians say, that our Saviour's " voluntary death and sufferings procured his

" exaltation at the right hand of God, and power " and authority to forgive sins, and to give eternal " life to as many as he pleased: so that they grant " that his obedience and sufferings, in the meri- " torious consequence of them, redound to our " benefit and advantage, as much as we pretend " to say they do; only they are loth, in express " terms, to acknowledge that Christ died in our " stead; and this for no other reason, that I can " imagine, but *because they have denied it so often* " *and so long.*' "—Vol. II. p. 61.

We have only to say, on this part of the subject, that we heartily commiserate the state of that man's mind, who, whatever socinian prejudices he may have felt against the most glorious of all doctrines, that of the atonement, does not feel them shaken at least, if not removed, by the arguments adduced in this letter.

The next is devoted to the defence of the Divinity of Jesus Christ, which our author evinces in a masterly manner, from the predictions of the ancient prophets, compared with their application in the New Testament; from the conduct, the miracles, and the discourses of our Lord; from the declarations of his apostles; and from the concurrent testimony of the early christian writers and martyrs, before the council of Nice. Under the last head, the reader will meet with a copious induction of passages, attesting this grand doctrine, selected with much judgement, and applied with great force. The author all along contends for

the divinity of Christ as a *fundamental* tenet; and, of course, will forfeit all pretensions to candour with *rational* christians, on whose approbation, indeed, he appears to set very little value.

In the next Letter, which is on Conversion, he has treated of the nature and necessity of that new birth, on which our Lord insisted so strenuously in his discourse with Nicodemus, in a manner which will be as offensive to mere nominal christians as it will be instructive and satisfactory to serious and humble inquirers after truth. He shews, from well-known and indubitable facts, the reality of such a change; and evinces its indispensable necessity, from the express declarations of scripture, the corruption of human nature, the exalted character of the Deity, and the nature of that pure and perfect felicity to which good men aspire after death. In illustrating this subject, he has made a happy use of Bishop Burnet's Narrative of the Conversion of the Earl of Rochester,—has carefully guarded his readers against the pernicious error of confounding regeneration with baptism,—and has closed the discussion with solving certain difficulties arising out of the subject, which have often perplexed serious minds.

As every effect naturally invites us to contemplate the cause, he passes from conversion to the consideration of Divine Influence, which is the subject of the succeeding Letter: and were we to give our opinion of the comparative merit of the different parts of this volume, we should be inclined

to assign the palm to the disquisition on this confessedly mysterious subject. In no part, certainly, is the vigour of the author's very powerful understanding more eminently exerted; in none are the prejudices founded on a pretended philosophy more triumphantly dispelled. He has shewn, in the most satisfactory manner, that the belief of an immediate divine influence on the mind, not only accords with the sentiments of the wisest men in pagan times, but that it is rendered highly reasonable by the close analogy it bears to the best-established laws of the material world. Though there are many admirable passages in this portion of the work, which it would gratify us to lay before our readers, we must content ourselves with the following.

"No person can look into the world with the "eye of a philosopher, and not soon ascertain, that "the grand theatre of phenomena which lies before "him, is naturally subdivided into two great classes "of scenery: the one exhibiting constrained, the "other voluntary motion; the former characteristic "of matter, the latter as clearly indicating some-"thing perfectly distinct from matter, and possess-"ing totally opposite qualities. 'Pulverise matter,' "says Saurin, 'give it all the different forms of "which it is susceptible, elevate it to its highest "degree of attainment, make it vast and immense, "moderate or small, luminous or obscure, opaque "or transparent, there will never result any thing "but *figures*; and never will you be able, by all

" these combinations or divisions, to produce one " single sentiment, one single thought.' The " reason is obvious; a substance compounded of " innumerable parts, which every one acknow- " ledges matter to be, cannot be the subject of an " individual consciousness; the seat of which *must* " be a simple and undivided substance; as the " great Dr. Clarke has long ago irrefragably shewn. " Intellect and volition are quite of a different " nature from corporeal figure or motion, and " must reside in, or emanate from, a different kind " of being, a kind which, to distinguish it from " matter, is called spirit, or mind. Of these, the " one is necessarily inert, the other essentially " active. The one is characterised by want of " animation, life, and even motion, except as it is " urged by something *ab extra;* the other is living, " energetic, self-moving, and possessed of power " to move other things. We often fancy, it is " true, that matter moves matter; but this, strictly " speaking, is not correct. When one wheel, or " lever, in a system of machinery, communicates " motion to matter, it can, at most, only com- " municate what it has received; and if you trace " the connexion of the mechanism, you will at " length arrive at a first mover, which first mover " is, in fact, *spiritual.* If, for example, it be an " animal, it is evidently the spiritual part of that " animal from whence the motion originally springs. " If, otherwise, it be the descent of a weight, or " the fall of water, or the force of a current of air,

"or the expansive power of steam, the action "must be ultimately referred to what are styled "powers of nature, that is, to gravitation or elas- "ticity; and these, it is now well known, cannot "be explained by any allusion to material principles, "but to the indesinent operation of the Great Spirit, "in whom we live, and move, and have our being— "the finger of God touching and urging the various "subordinate springs, which, in their turn, move "the several parts of the universe. Thus God "acts in all places, in all times, and upon all "persons. The whole material world, were it not "for his Spirit, would be inanimate and inactive: "all motion is derived either from his energy, or "from a spirit which he animates; and it is next "to *certain*, that the only primary action is that "of spirit, and the most direct and immediate "that of spirit upon spirit."—P. 154.

We doubt not the intelligent reader will be of opinion, that the author has gone to the very bottom of this subject, and will feel highly gratified in seeing it placed in so clear and convincing a light; the more so, as he has taken care to guard against its most obvious abuse, by shewing that the influence for which he contends is not to be expected independent of means,—among which he considers prayer, and a conscientious regard to known duty, as the principal. We earnestly recommend this part of the performance to such of our readers as have, upon too light grounds, imbibed philosophical prejudices against

the doctrine contended for; a doctrine which lies at the foundation of all spiritual religion, though treated by many with an excess of insolence and scorn, which can hardly be accounted for without adverting to the injudicious conduct of its advocates.

The important doctrine of Justification by Faith, forms the subject of the next Letter in the series. Here, after confirming the position he means to defend, by the authority of the Homilies, he proceeds to a more particular discussion of the subject, under three heads of inquiry: What is meant by justification?—what by faith?—and what is the genuine import of "justification by faith?" Under each of these the reader will meet with much instruction, arising from a very luminous statement of truth, accompanied with happy illustrations. The charge against the doctrine pleaded for, of its tending to licentiousness, is very successfully combated and refuted.

The exhibition of the leading *doctrines* of christianity is completed in the three following Letters,—on Providence, the Resurrection, and the Eternal Existence of Man after Death. We perused, with much satisfaction, the author's masterly defence of a particular providence, the denial of which is, to all practical purposes, equivalent to the denial of a providence altogether. Trust in God is the act of an individual, as all the exercises of piety must necessarily be; so that if the providence of God embraces not the concerns of individuals, no

rational foundation can be conceived for expecting protection from danger, or relief under distress, in answer to prayer. The denial of a particular providence is, it must be confessed, the best possible expedient for keeping God at a distance—and on that account so vehemently insisted on by certain periodical writers, the poison of whose impiety, prepared, it is generally understood, by *hallowed* hands, and distributed through the nation in a popular and seducing vehicle, has met with a powerful antidote and rebuke from Dr. Gregory, who, himself a layman, will be honoured as the champion of that religion which a clergyman has insulted and betrayed.* How is it that the conductors of the publication alluded to, allot to this clerical associate the province of libelling religion? Is it that its alliance with nominal sanctity gives rank impiety a new zest, at the same time that its total dereliction of principle more perfectly incorporates the specific design of the article with the general character of the work?

In treating of the Resurrection of the Dead, the author has happily availed himself of the striking analogies which the system of nature presents, as if designed on purpose, as Tertullian more than insinuates, to excite the expectation of such an event. Among others highly deserving attention, we shall present our readers with the following, in the words of Dr. Gregory :—

* See the Article on Methodism, in the Edinburgh Review.

"Nearly allied to these are the examples of "peculiar transformations undergone by various "insects, and the state of rest and insensibility "which precede those transformations: such as "the chrysalis or aurelia state of butterflies, "moths, and silk-worms. The myrmeleon for- "micaleo, of whose larva, and its extraordinary "history, Reaumur and Roesel have given accurate "descriptions, continues in its insensible or chry- "salis state about four weeks. The libellula, or "dragon-fly, continues still longer in its state of "inaction. Naturalists tell us, that the worm "repairs to the margin of its pond, in quest of "a convenient place of abode during its insensible "state. It attaches itself to a plant, or piece of "dry wood, and the skin, which gradually becomes "parched and brittle, at last splits opposite to the "upper part of the thorax: through this aperture "the insect, now become winged, quickly pushes "its way; and, being thus extricated from con- "finement, begins to expand its wings, to flutter, "and, finally, to launch into the air with that "gracefulness and ease which are peculiar to this "majestic tribe. Now, who that saw, for the "first time, the little pendant coffin in which the "insect lay entombed, and was ignorant of the "transformation of which we are now speaking, "would ever predict that, in a few weeks, perhaps "in a few days or hours, it would become one of "the most elegant and active of *winged* insects? "And who that contemplates, with the mind of

"a philosopher, this curious transformation, and "knows that two years before the insect mounts "into air, even while it is living in water, it has "the rudiments of wings, can deny that the body "of a dead man may, at some future period, be "again invested with vigour and activity, and "soar to regions for which some latent organiza- "tion may have peculiarly fitted it?"—P. 225.

In descanting on the change that will be effected by the resurrection, when we shall be invested with a glorified body, the language of the author rises to a high pitch of elevation, and exhibits a scene which surpasses the brightest visions of poetry; while the exactness of the delineation, in its most essential lineaments, is attested by the "true sayings of God." The science with which the mind of the author is so richly imbued, enables him to mingle a refined spirit of philosophy with the colours of imagination, which, without diminishing their brightness, compels the assent of the understanding, while it captivates the heart.

In the Letter on the Eternal Existence after Death, the author strenuously opposes the sleep of the soul, and urges formidable, and, we apprehend, irrefragable arguments, for interpreting the passages of scripture which speak of the everlasting misery of the impenitent, in their obvious and literal sense: nor have we met with a discussion of this awful subject so calculated to carry conviction to a philosophical mind, provided it be disposed to bow to the authority of revelation.

His confutation of the reasoning of his opponents, founded on the supposed ambiguity of the terms employed to denote an eternal duration, is particularly masterly.

On the third branch of his subject, which relates to the Duties of Christianity, he is comparatively brief,—not, it is evident, from his undervaluing their importance, but partly, we conceive, on account of the length of his former discussions, and partly, because in this part there is little room for controversy. He has contented himself with arranging the duties of christianity under three heads—those which relate to God, to our fellow-creatures, and to ourselves; and with illustrating and enforcing them by a direct appeal to the language of scripture.

Having endeavoured to put our readers in possession of the general plan and design of this work, we shall close this article with a few general observations on it.

Dr. Gregory, throughout, denominates the abettors of the simple humanity of Christ, socinians, instead of employing their favourite appellation of unitarians. We rejoice that he has done so, and hope his example will be generally followed. To accede to the appellation of unitarians, is to yield up the very point in debate; for, ask them what they mean by unitarian, and they will feel no scruple in replying, that it denotes a believer in one God, in opposition to a tritheist. That this is not asserted at random, is evident, as well

from many other facts, as from the following very remarkable one,—that when a noted academic was, some years since, expelled from the university of Cambridge, amidst various points which he insisted on in his defence, one was this, that it was quite absurd to censure him for avowing unitarian principles, since he never heard but of one person who publicly declared himself *not an unitarian.* Now, what did he mean by this singular assertion? Did he mean to say that he never heard of more than one person who publicly affirmed his belief in a *plurality* of *persons* in the Godhead? This is impossible. What could he mean, then, but that he never knew but of one person who affirmed himself *not to be a believer in one God?*—which is neither more nor less than to identify the term unitarian with a believer in one God, and the term trinitarian with a believer in three. Let the intelligent public judge whether it is not high time to withhold from these men an appellation which assumes the question at issue, and which cannot be bestowed without being converted into an occasion of insult and triumph over their opponents. There was a time when the learning and moderation of Lardner, and the fame and science of Priestley, combined to throw a transitory splendour over their system, and to procure from the christian world a forbearance and complaisance to which they were ill entitled. That time is past. Such *rational* christians as they are, should have discernment to perceive that it is not with them as in

months past, when the candle of their leader shone around them: it becomes them to bow their spirit to the humbled state of their fortunes. They should learn at last to know themselves. The world is perfectly aware, whether they perceive it or not, that socinianism is now a headless trunk, bleeding at every vein, and exhibiting no other symptoms of life but its frightful convulsions.

But why should they be offended at being styled socinians, when it is undeniable that they agree with Socinus in his fundamental position, (the simple humanity of Christ,) which is all the agreement that subsists between the followers of Calvin or Arminius, and those eminent persons? The calvinists are far from concurring in every particular with Calvin,—the arminiäns, with Arminius; yet neither of them have violently disclaimed these appellations, or considered them as terms of reproach. Why are the socinians only offended at being denominated after Socinus? Is it because they differ in the nature of Christ's person from that celebrated heresiarch? This they will not pretend. But they differ from him in many respects! In what respects? Is it in those respects in which his sentiments gave most offence to the christian world? Is it that they have receded from him in that direction which brings them nearer to the generally received doctrine of the church? Just the reverse. In the esteem of all but themselves they have descended many degrees lower in the scale of error, have plunged many fathoms

deeper in the gulph of impiety; yet, with an assurance of which they have furnished the only example, they affect to consider themselves injured by being styled socinians, when they know, in their own consciences, that they differ from Socinus only in pushing the degradation of the Saviour to a much greater length—and that, in the view of the christian world, their religious delinquencies differ from his, only as treason differs from sedition, or sacrilege from theft. The appellation of socinian, as applied to them, is a term of forbearance, calculated, if they would suffer it, not to expose, but to hide, a part of their shame. Let them assume any denomination they please, provided it be such as will fairly represent their sentiments. Let them be styled antiscripturalists, humanitarians, semideists, priestleians, or socinians. But let them not be designated by a term which is merely coveted by them for the purpose of chicane and imposture.

Our readers will perceive that the system which Dr. Gregory strenuously abets is orthodoxy; but it is moderate and catholic; it is the orthodoxy of the three first centuries; it is that system which, communicated by Christ and his apostles, pervaded the church long before the confusion of modern sects arose, or even the distinction between protestants and catholics was heard of: it is the orthodoxy which has nourished the root of piety in every age, warmed the breasts of saints and martyrs, and will continue to subsist in the

church till the heavens and the earth are no more.

We congratulate the public on the accession of Dr. Gregory to such a cause; and sincerely rejoice that, amidst his multifarious scientific pursuits, he has found time and inclination to meditate so deeply, and to exhibit so successfully, "the truth as it is in Jesus." We hope his example will stimulate other men of science and genius to pursue so noble a career. We will venture to assure them, that, upon a dying bed, it will occasion no regret to reflect upon their having enrolled their names with such illustrious laymen as Boyle, Newton, and Locke, in the defence of christianity.

In a beautiful passage of Euripides, Medea is introduced, expressing her surprise, that, amidst such a multitude of inventions and inquiries, the art of persuasion, the mistress of human volition, should alone have been neglected. This neglect cannot be imputed to Dr. Gregory. He has united, with extraordinary attainments in the severer sciences, the art of recommending his sentiments with the most impressive effect; and though he is above a solicitude respecting the minuter graces of finished composition, he exhibits, in an eminent degree, the most important ingredients of good writing. He is correct and luminous, and often rises to the tone of the most impassioned feeling. His language is eminently easy, flowing, and idiomatic. The abstractions of science have not in him exerted the influence often imputed to

them, of chilling the heart, and impairing the vigour of the imagination. While he reasons with the comprehension and depth which distinguish the philosopher, he feels with ardour, and paints with force. He is often inspired and transported with his theme. In the midst of pursuits, which are not always found to have a propitious effect on the religious character of their votaries, he has found the means of preserving his devotion in its warmth, his faith in its purity, and his sensibility in its infantine freshness and vigour.

We must conclude with earnestly recommending this work to the attentive perusal of young persons whose minds have been cultivated by science and letters; and must be permitted to add, that we are acquainted with no book, in the circle of English literature, which is equally calculated to give persons of that description, just views of the evidence, the nature, and the importance of revealed religion.

REVIEW

OF

BELSHAM'S MEMOIRS OF LINDSEY.

Memoirs of the late Rev. Theophilus Lindsey, A. M. including a brief Analysis of his Works; together with Anecdotes and Letters of eminent Persons, his Friends and Correspondents: also a general View of the Progress of the Unitarian Doctrine in England and America. By THOMAS BELSHAM, *Minister of the Chapel in Essex-street.* 8vo. Pp. xxiv. 514. 1812.

As the life of Mr. Lindsey is evidently adopted as a vehicle for the propagation of socinian sentiments, we shall be excused for being more copious in our remarks upon it, than the biography of a man of such extreme mediocrity of talents could otherwise possibly justify. If a zealous attachment to any system of opinions, can be supposed to be aided by its association with personal reputation, we cannot wonder at finding Mr. Lindsey's fondness for socinianism so ardent and so persevering, inasmuch as the annals of religion scarcely furnish an instance of a celebrity acquired so entirely by the adoption of a particular creed. Luther and Calvin would have risen to distinction, in all probability, if the Reformation had never been heard

of; while the existence of such a man as Mr. Lindsey would not have been known beyond the precincts of his parish, had he not, under a peculiar combination of circumstances, embraced the tenets of Socinus.

His reputation is altogether accidental and factitious. Though the leading events of his life, with one exception, are marked by no striking peculiarities, yet, by the help of a great deal of adventitious matter, Mr. B. has contrived to make it the groundwork of a bulky, and not unentertaining volume; disfigured, however, throughout, by that languid and inelegant verbosity which characterizes all his compositions. It must be confessed, Mr. Belsham has taken care in this work to exhibit himself as no ascetic, no religious enthusiast, but quite a man of the world; not by a lively delineation of its manners and foibles, still less by a developement of the principles by which mankind are actuated, but by such a profusion of compliments bestowed on men of rank and title, and so perfect a prostration before secular grandeur, as has never been paralleled, we suspect, in a christian divine. At the "pomp and circumstance" of human life, this philosopher appears awed and planet-struck, and utterly incapable of exercising that small portion of discrimination with which nature has endowed him. Every nobleman or statesman he has occasion to introduce, is uniformly ushered in with a splendid retinue of gorgeous epithets, in which there are as little taste

and variety as if they had been copied verbatim from the rolls at the herald's office. Orators of preeminent powers, together with virtuous and enlightened noblemen, meet us at every turn; and we are not a little surprised at finding so much of the decoration and splendour of this mortal scene, in so close contact with the historical details of unitarianism. We have long remarked the eagerness of socinians to emblazon their system by associations with learning, rank, and fashion; but on no other occasion have we seen this humour carried so far as in these Memoirs.

The leading events of Mr. Lindsey's life are the following. He was born, June 20, 1723, at Middlewich in Cheshire, where his father was a mercer in respectable circumstances, but was afterwards reduced by misfortunes. His mother, whose maiden name was Spencer, was distantly related to the Marlborough family; and, previously to her marriage, lived twenty years in the family of Frances, Countess of Huntingdon; a circumstance which led to considerable intimacy, that continued for some years, with the celebrated Selina, Countess of Huntingdon, who married the son of that lady. Under the patronage of Lady Betty and Lady Ann Hastings, Mr. Lindsey was educated first at a school in the neighbourhood of Middlewich, whence he was removed, and placed under the care of the Rev. Mr. Barnard, master of the free grammar-school in that town, who is represented as a gentleman of distinguished learning and piety. His vacations

were usually spent at the mansion of his noble patronesses, in the vicinity of Leeds, during the life of Lady Betty Hastings; and, after her decease, at Ashby Place, near Ashby de la Zouch, in Leicestershire, where Lady Ann then fixed her residence. In the eighteenth year of his age, May 21, 1741, he was admitted a student at St. John's, Cambridge, where he acquitted himself with credit in his academical exercises, and behaved with such exemplary propriety as to attract the attention of Dr. Reynolds, Bishop of Lincoln, who thought fit to intrust him with the care of his grandson, a youth of fifteen. He was elected fellow of St. John's College in April, 1747. Having been ordained by Bishop Gibson, he was, at the recommendation of Lady Ann Hastings, presented to a chapel in Spital Square by Sir George Wheler. In a short time after his settlement in London, the Duke of Somerset received him into his house in the capacity of domestic chaplain. He continued, after the decease of that nobleman, to reside some time with the duchess dowager, better known by the title of Countess of Hertford; and, at her request, he accompanied her grandson, the present Duke of Northumberland, then about nine years of age, and in a delicate state of health, to the Continent, where he continued two years; at the expiration of which time he brought back his noble pupil, improved both in his health and learning. From this distinguished personage he continued to receive attentions and favours as long as he lived.

Immediately after his return from the Continent, he was presented by the Earl of Northumberland to the valuable rectory of Kirkby Whiske, in the north riding of Yorkshire; at first, under condition to resign it when the person for whom it was intended should come of age; but this young man dying a short time afterwards, it was given to Mr. Lindsey unconditionally, in the usual form. In this very retired situation Mr. Lindsey continued about three years; and, during his residence in Yorkshire, he became acquainted with the celebrated Archdeacon Blackburne, at Richmond—a circumstance which led to important consequences, and to which he was indebted, under Providence, for the most important blessing of his life.

In the year 1756, at the request of the Huntingdon family, he resigned the living of Kirkby Whiske for the living of Piddletown, in Dorsetshire, which was in the gift of the Earl of Huntingdon. In this place he lived seven years; and, in 1760, married Miss Elsworth, the stepdaughter of Archdeacon Blackburne,—a lady whose principles were congenial with his own, and who is represented as possessed of a superior understanding and of exalted virtue. It was during his residence in that situation, that he first began to entertain scruples concerning the lawfulness of trinitarian worship, and of his continuing to officiate in the established church. It appears he had, from his early youth, disapproved of some things in the thirty-nine articles. Some years afterwards, these doubts were matured

into a full conviction that the divinity of Christ was an erroneous tenet, and that the Father was the sole object of worship; in consequence of which, while in Dorsetshire, he took some previous steps with a view to quitting his preferment in the church. In the year 1762, upon the appointment of the late Duke of Northumberland to be lord lieutenant of Ireland, he was strongly urged to accept the place of chaplain to his grace; which, from the preference he gave to a retired situation, he declined. An opportunity occurring, the year following, of exchanging his living for that of Catterick in Yorkshire, he made the exchange, for the sake of enjoying the society of Archdeacon Blackburne and his family, who lived in that neighbourhood. On this occasion, Mr. Belsham justly remarks, "It "may appear singular that Mr. Lindsey could sub- "mit to that renewed subscription which was requi- "site in order to his induction to a new living.

"And the case," he adds, "appears the more "extraordinary, as many clergymen, who, in con- "sequence of a revolution in their opinions, had "become dissatisfied with the Articles, would never, "for the sake of obtaining the most valuable pre- "ferment, subscribe them again, though, while "they were permitted to remain unmolested, they "did not perceive it to be their duty to retire "from the church."—P. 17.

The extreme want of candour and sincerity evinced by such conduct, is very unsatisfactorily apologized for by Mr. Lindsey, and is very gently

reproved by Mr. Belsham. The principal plea alleged by Mr. L. in defence of himself, is, that as he continued to officiate in the forms of the liturgy, his renewed subscription gave him little concern, since he considered himself, every time he used the liturgy, as virtually repeating his subscription. At length, he brought himself, he says, to consider the trinitarian forms in the liturgy, and the invocations at the entrance of the litany, as

"A threefold representation of the one God, "the Father, governing all things by himself and "by his Son and Spirit; and as a threefold way "of addressing him as a Creator, and original "benevolent cause of all things, as Redeemer of "mankind by his Son, and their Sanctifier by "his Holy Spirit."—P. 23.

How far he was influenced by mercenary considerations in retaining his station under such circumstances, it is impossible to say; but that he was guilty of much collusion and impious prevarication in this affair, cannot be reasonably doubted. Nor is there any species of simulation or dissimulation in religion, which might not be justified on pretences equally plausible: and when we recollect that Mr. L. persisted in that conduct for a series of years, we shall find it difficult to conceive of him as that prodigy of virtue which Mr. Belsham represents him. "He must be a severe moralist," says Mr. B. "whom such a concession does not satisfy." And what is this

concession, that is to stop every mouth, and to convert censure into praise? We will give it in Mr. L.'s own words: it is this:

"Not," says he, "that I now justify myself "therein; yea, rather I condemn myself. But "as I have humble hope of the divine forgive- "ness, let not men be too rigid in their cen- "sures."—P. 24.

It is impossible to conceive a confession of conduct extremely criminal, in terms of lighter reprehension; but, agreeably to the theory of Mr. B., the merit of repentance so much exceeds the moral turpitude of transgression, that the faintest indications of it transport him with admiration. For our parts, were we not aware of the tendency of socinianism to produce a most attenuated conception of the evil of sin, we should have expected to find such insincerity and impiety deplored in the strongest language of penitential sorrow. As we wish, however, to do ample justice to the real virtues of Mr. L., we feel a pleasure in quoting the following account of the manner in which he conducted himself while he was rector of Catterick.

"No sooner was he settled," says his biographer, "in his new situation, than he applied "himself with great assiduity, in his extensive "and populous parish, to perform the duties of "a parochial minister. He regularly officiated "twice on the Sunday in his parish church, "and in the interval between the services he

"catechised young people. He visited the sick, he "relieved the poor, he established and supported "charity schools for the children, he spent con- "siderable sums of money in feeding the hungry, "in clothing the naked, in providing medicines "for the diseased, and in purchasing and dis- "tributing books for the instruction of the "ignorant. In his domestic arrangements, the "greatest economy was observed, that he and his "excellent lady might have the greater surplus "to expend in liberality and charity; for it was "a rule with him to lay up nothing from the "income of his living."—P. 26.

This is unquestionably a pleasing picture of the character of an exemplary christian pastor. It does not appear that any considerable success attended his labours. On this head he contents himself with expressing a faint hope, that some of the seed he had sowed might not be lost.

In this situation he continued ten years, till a dangerous fit of sickness roused his conscience, and rendered his continuance in the discharge of his ecclesiastical functions insupportable. We are far from wishing to depreciate the value of that sacrifice which Mr. Lindsey tardily and reluctantly made to the claims of conscience; but we cannot conceal our surprise, that a measure to which he was forced, in order to quell the apprehensions he most justly entertained of the displeasure of the Almighty, after a system of prevarication persisted in for upwards of ten years, should be

extolled in terms which can only be applied with propriety to instances of heroic virtue. To prefer the surrender of certain worldly advantages to a perseverance in conduct highly criminal, evinces a mind not utterly insensible to the force of moral obligation,—and nothing more. Our admiration must be reserved for a higher species of excellence; for an adherence to the side of delicacy and honour, where many plausibilities might be urged to the contrary; or a resolute pursuit of the path of virtue, when it is obstructed by the last extremities of evil. Mr. Lindsey renounced, it is true, a respectable and lucrative situation in the church, rather than continue any longer in the practice of what he considered as idolatry. But he was unincumbered with a family; he possessed some personal property; and enjoyed the friendship of several great and noble personages, who were never likely to suffer him to sink into absolute poverty. He merely descended to the level where many of the best, and some of the greatest of men, have chosen to place themselves, and where his friend Dr. Priestley, whose talents would have commanded any preferment in the church, chose, from an attachment to the same principles, to remain for life. We approve his resignation of his living; but we confess we are more disposed to wonder that he could reconcile himself to continue in his situation so long, than that he should feel himself compelled to quit it at last.

This event took place in the year 1773; after which he came to London, and a plan was set on foot for opening a chapel for him in the metropolis, where, retaining the use of a liturgy modified agreeably to his views, he might promulgate the tenets of Socinus. Many persons, Mr. B. informs us, both of the establishment and among the dissenters, aided the undertaking; among whom are particularly enumerated Dr. Priestley, and Dr. Price, Samuel Shore, Esq. of Norton Hall, in Yorkshire, and Robert Newton, Esq. of Norton House, in the same village.

These gentlemen, in conjunction with others, entered into a subscription, to indemnify him for the necessary expenses incurred in procuring and fitting up his chapel. The place fixed upon for this grand experiment, was a room in Essex House, Essex Street, which having before been used as an auction-room, was capable, at a moderate expense, of being turned into a convenient place of worship. Here Mr. L. introduced his improved liturgy, formed very much upon the plan of Dr. Clarke's, but with such variations as corresponded to the difference of his views from those of that celebrated divine. From this period, the life of Mr. L. proceeds in a very equable and uniform course, with little worthy of remark, besides the various publications to which the system he had adopted gave birth; and over the congregation formed in Essex Street, he continued to preside till his seventieth year, when he thought fit to

retire from a public station: after which he lived sixteen years, when he was attacked with a disease, which was judged to be a pressure on the brain, and expired in the eighty-sixth year of his age. Such are the outlines of a narrative which Mr. Belsham has contrived to extend to upwards of five hundred octavo pages. It is by no means our intention to follow the biographer through his boundless excursions, or to criticise every remark which appears to us justly obnoxious to censure. We shall content ourselves with selecting a few passages, and making a few observations, which may serve to illustrate the genius and progress of socinianism, the promotion of which evidently appears to be the sole object of the writer of these Memoirs.

The secession of Mr. Lindsey from the established church produced much less impression than might have been expected; nor does it appear that his example was followed by one individual among the clergy, until Mr. Disney, his brother-in-law, after the lapse of some years, adopted the same measure, and afterwards became his colleague in the ministry. The establishment of a socinian chapel with a reformed liturgy in the metropolis, is narrated by our biographer with the utmost pomp, as forming a distinguished epoch in the annals of religion; and, undoubtedly, great hopes were entertained of its producing a memorable revolution among the episcopalians: but these expectations were frustrated. The auditory, composed chiefly of persons of opulence, (among

whom the Duke of Grafton made the principal figure,) was at no time very numerous; and no similar society was formed from among the members of the established church in any part of the United Kingdom. The utmost that the efforts of Lindsey, Priestley, and others, effected, was to convert the teachers of arianism among the dissenters into socinians, who exerted themselves with tolerable success to disseminate their principles in their respective congregations: so that the boasted triumphs of socinianism consisted in sinking that section of the dissenting body, which had already departed from the faith, a few degrees lower in the gulf of error. From these very Memoirs under consideration, we derive the most convincing evidence that the tenets of Socinus, with respect to the nation at large, have lost ground, and that the people of England are by no means so favourably disposed to them as formerly. They also present us a very full and particular account of the association of a part of the clergy at the Feathers Tavern, to procure relief in the matter of subscription; for which purpose, agreeably to a resolution of the general body, on the 6th of February, 1772, a petition was presented to the house of commons. The number of the petitioners amounted to nearly two hundred and fifty, among whom, the names of the celebrated Archdeacon Blackburne, and Law, bishop of Carlisle, were the most distinguished. Of the state of the public mind in the metropolis, we have a

striking picture in a letter from John Lee, afterwards solicitor-general, a zealous friend of the discontented clergy. "It will surprise you who live in the country," says he, "and consequently have not been informed of the discoveries of the metropolis, that the christian religion is not thought to be an object worthy of the least regard; and that it is not only the most prudent, but the most virtuous and benevolent thing in the world, to divert men's minds from such frivolous subjects with all the dexterity that can be. This is no exaggeration, I assure you; on the contrary, it seems to be the opinion (and their conduct will shew it) of nine-tenths of both houses of parliament!" Allowing for some slight exaggeration arising from the chagrin and vexation of the writer, it is still impossible not to perceive, if any credit is due to his statement, that parliament were not in a disposition to feel any conscientious objections to the repeal of the Articles, and that if they opposed such a measure, that opposition originated simply from the fear of innovation, common to politicians. The manner in which the debate was conducted when the affair came actually under the consideration of the house, confirms this conclusion.

There was not one member who expressed his belief in the Articles: it was treated entirely as a political question, without once adverting to its intrinsic merits, as involving a religious controversy; and Mr. Hans Stanley opposed the bringing up

of the petition, as it tended to disturb the peace of the country, which, in his opinion, ought to be the subject of a fortieth Article, which would be well worth all the thirty-nine.* With such levity and contempt was the national creed treated at that time. Will the sturdiest champion of socinianism affirm that a similar discussion in the house of commons, or in the upper house, would be conducted in a similar manner at present? or that there would be one member who would contend for the continuance of the Articles on the ground of their intrinsic excellence and verity? The fact is, that through the secularity and irreligion of the clergy, evangelical truth was nearly effaced from the minds of the members of the establishment in the higher ranks, and that an indolent acquiescence in established formularies, had succeeded to the ardour with which the great principles of religion were embraced at the Reformation. Such was the state of the public mind, that in a contest between orthodoxy and heresy, the former proved triumphant, merely because it was already established, and had the plea of antiquity and prescription in its favour. Since that period, vital religion has revived in the national church; the flame of controversy has been widely spread; the inconsistency of socinianism with the Scriptures, together with its genuine tendency and character, have been fully developed; it has lost the attraction of novelty; it has revolted the minds

* See pages 51, 55, of these Memoirs.

of men by its impiety; and, having been weighed in the balance, it has been found wanting. If among the clergy there still subsist a small remnant who are attached to those unscriptural tenets, they are content with being connived at, and nothing could now urge them to the imprudence of presenting their claims for legal security to the legislature. We hear nothing of an intention to renew the scenes which took place at the Feathers Tavern in 1772.

We consider this as a decisive proof that socinianism has lost ground in the nation, notwithstanding its prevalence in societies of a certain description among the dissenters. Those who never formally renounced the orthodox doctrine, have, in consequence of recent discussions, become more than ever attached to it: while that class of dissenters who were already moving in an heretical direction, have reposed in socinianism as their natural centre of gravity. From several other circumstances recorded in these Memoirs, the same inference may be drawn with respect to the discredit under which this system lies at present, compared with the countenance and indulgence with which it was received thirty or forty years back. While Mr. Lindsey was deliberating on the propriety of quitting his living, it was suggested to him by Dr. Priestley, that he might continue to officiate, by making such alterations in the public offices of devotion as would accord with his peculiar views. "Nor was there any ground to suspect,"

says Mr. B., "that he would have met with any molestation from his superiors." Mr. Chambers, who held the living of Oundle, in Northamptonshire, Mr. Disney, for many years, and others, did so, without being called to account for their conduct. We should be sorry to express ourselves with an improper degree of confidence; but we may venture to express a firm persuasion, that such a silent repeal of the doctrine of the church by the mere authority of a parochial minister, would not now be permitted to pass unnoticed, or uncensured, in any part of the kingdom. The dignitaries of the church are alive to the importance of the distinguishing truths of christianity, and would shew themselves prompt and eager, as appears from recent instances, to discourage the open disavowal of them. We have no hesitation in asserting, that the hope of rendering the tenets of the Polish heresiarch popular and prevalent throughout this nation, was at no period so completely extinguished as at the present; and from a certain air of despondency which the memorialist of Lindsey betrays, amidst all his gasconades, we are convinced he is of the same opinion. The disposition on all occasions to vaunt of their success, and to predict, with great confidence, the speedy triumph of their principles, is a peculiar feature in the character of modern socinians; and the absurd and exaggerated statements of matters of fact into which this propensity betrays them, are truly ludicrous. All other sorts

of enthusiasts of whom we have either heard or read, are, in this respect, cold and phlegmatic compared with them. In various extracts from the letters of Mr. Lindsey's correspondents, and of others, representations are made of numerous and rapid conversions to socinianism, which Mr. B., from a regard to truth and decency, finds it necessary to correct and apologize for, as the effusion of well-intended but intemperate zeal. The boast of success is almost invariably the precursor of a statement on the part of Mr. B., in which it is either repealed or qualified; and it is but doing him justice to say, that his judgement and experience have exempted him from those illusions and deceptions of which his party have become the easy dupes. We had been confidently informed, for instance, that almost all the people of Boston, in the province of Massachusets, were becoming socinians, and that the ministers, with the exception of one or two, had already declared themselves such; when it appears, from the unimpeachable authority of Mr. Wells, himself a socinian, and an inhabitant of that city, that there is but one professedly unitarian chapel throughout New England: and so little sanguine is he with respect to the spread of that doctrine, that he strongly deprecates its discussion, from a conviction that it will issue in producing, among the body of the people, a more confirmed attachment to orthodoxy.* It is also worthy of remark, that these

* See his Letter in the Appendix of the Memoirs.

extravagant boasts of success, are not accompanied with the slightest advertence to the moral or spiritual effects which the socinian doctrine produces on the character: this is a consideration which rarely, if ever, enters into the mind of its most zealous abettors, who appear to be perfectly satisfied if they can but accomplish a change of sentiment, however inefficacious to all practical purposes. Their converts are merely proselyted to an opinion, without pretending to be converted to God; and if they are not as much injured by the change as the proselytes made by the pharisees of old, it must be ascribed to causes totally distinct from the superior excellence of the tenets which they have embraced. They have been taught to discard the worship of Christ, and to abjure all dependence upon him as a Saviour—an admirable preparation, it must be confessed, for a devout and holy life. Let the abettors of these doctrines produce, if they can, a single instance of a person, who, in consequence of embracing them, was reclaimed from a vicious to a virtuous life, from a neglect of serious piety to an exemplary discharge of its obligations and duties; and their success, to whatever extent it has been realized, would suggest an argument in their favour deserving some attention. But who is ignorant that among the endless fluctuations of fashions and opinions recorded in the annals of religion, the most absurd and pernicious systems have flourished for a while; and that arianism, for instance, which these

men profess to abhor almost as much as orthodoxy, prevailed to such a degree, for years, as to threaten to become the prevalent religion of Christendom?* Socinianism can boast but few converts compared with infidelity; in England, of late, they have gone hand in hand, and their progress has been simultaneous, derived from the same causes, and productive of the same effects. Shall we therefore affirm that infidelity is to be rejected with less confidence, because it possesses in reality that to which socinianism only pretends? When we reflect on the inert and torpid character of socinianism, it is surprising any serious expectation should be entertained of its final triumph. From innumerable passages in these Memoirs, it appears that the far greater number, of those who have embraced it in the established church, have been content to retain their situation; and it is certain that of the two hundred and fifty who joined in the petition for relief in the matter of subscription, Mr. Lindsey was the only person who made any sacrifice of emolument to principle. We find both Mr. Lindsey and Mr. Belsham incessantly reproaching unitarians with timidity, in declining the avowal of their sentiments; and the former remarking, with just indignation, that, amidst the multitudes that concurred in his views, there was but one member of the established church that

* See the Second Book of Sulpicius Severus, chap. 35. "Tum hæresis Arii prorupit *totumque orbem* invecto errore turbaverat."

afforded him any pecuniary aid towards defraying the necessary expenses attendant on the opening of his chapel. The avowal of socinianism among dissenters has rarely been followed by worldly privations; and in the church of England, where such consequences must have ensued, it has not been made. Except in the instances of Lindsey, Jebb, and a very few others, the converts to socinianism have stooped to the meanest prevarication, and the most sacrilegious hypocrisy, rather than sacrifice their worldly emolument and honours. Compare this with the conduct of the puritans, in the reign of Charles the Second, who, though the points at issue were comparatively trifling and insignificant, chose, to the number of two thousand, to encounter every species of obloquy and distress, rather than do violence to their conscience; and learn the difference between the heroism inspired by christian principle, and the base and pusillanimous spirit of heresy. What an infatuation to expect that a system which inspires its votaries with no better sentiments and feelings than are evinced by these decisive facts, will ever become the prevailing belief; a system which, while it militates against every page of revelation, is betrayed by the selfish timidity of its followers! The system of Socinus is a cold negation: the whole secret of it consists in thinking meanly of Christ; and what tendency such a mode of thinking can have to inspire elevation or ardour, it is not easy to comprehend. If it is

calculated to relieve the conscience of a weight, which the principles of orthodoxy render it difficult to shake off, without complying with the conditions of the gospel, infidelity answers the same purpose still better, and possesses a still higher degree of simplicity,—meaning by that term what socinians generally mean—the total absence of mystery.

Great part of these Memoirs is occupied in giving a copious analysis of Mr. L.'s publications; which possessing no intrinsic merit, nor having excited more than a temporary interest, it would be trifling with the patience of our readers, to suppose they could derive either entertainment or instruction from seeing them abridged. Of Mr. Lindsey, considered as a writer, it is sufficient to observe, that the measure of intellect he displayed was the most ordinary, and that he was not possessed of the power, in its lowest degree, of either inventing what was rare, or embellishing what was common. He was perspicuous, because he contented himself, on all occasions, with the most commonplace thoughts; he was simple, because he aspired to nothing more than to convey his meaning in intelligible terms, without the least conception of force, elegance, or harmony. Though his writings are replete with professions of unbounded liberality and candour, it is evident, from his treatment of Mr. Robinson of Cambridge, that he was indulgent only towards those who approached nearer to infidelity than himself. Nothing can be conceived more splenetic and

acrimonious than his examination of that ingenious author's Plea for the Divinity of Christ, who, in return for compliments and condescensions, which, however unworthy of the cause he was defending, were sufficient to soften a Cerberus, met with nothing but rudeness and insolence. It was truly amusing to see the imbecility of a Lindsey assuming the airs of a Warburton. Throughout the whole of that publication, he affects to consider Mr. Robinson as a mere superficial declaimer; although his friend, Archdeacon Blackburne, Mr. B. informs us, always spoke of the Plea as a most able and unanswerable performance. So much for the modesty of this heretical confessor!

But it is time to leave Mr. L. to that oblivion which is the infallible destiny of him and of his works, and to proceed to make a few remarks on the narrative, and the miscellaneous strictures of his biographer. In the first place, we congratulate him on his abatement of that tone of arrogance which so strikingly characterised his former publications. Not that we ever expect him to exhibit himself in the light of an amiable or unassuming writer, which would be for the Ethiopian to change his skin; but it is with pleasure we remark less insolence and dogmatism than he has displayed on other occasions. He writes like a person who is conscious he is supporting a sinking cause; an air of despondency may be detected amidst his efforts to appear gay and cheerful. He knows perfectly well that he is celebrating the obsequies, not the

triumph, of socinianism: and from the little advantage it has derived from its former efforts, his vanity will not prevent him from suspecting that he is giving ashes to ashes, and dust to dust.

In this, as in all his former publications, he evinces a total ignorance of human nature, together with that propensity to overrate the practical effect of metaphysical theories, which almost invariably attaches to metaphysicians of an inferior order. He who invents a metaphysical system, which possesses the least claim to public regard, must have paid a profound attention to the actual constitution of human nature. He must have explored the most delicate and intricate processes of the mind, and kept a vigilant eye on the various phenomena which it presents. He is necessarily *above* his theory, having been conducted to it by an independent effort of thought. He has not adjusted his observations to his hypothesis, but his hypothesis to his observations. The humble disciple, the implicit admirer, proceeds too often in a directly opposite manner. All he knows of the mental constitution, in its more intricate movements, he derives from the system prepared to his hand, which he adopts with all its crudities, and confidently employs as the key which is to unlock all the recesses of nature. Having been accustomed to contemplate the human mind with a constant view to the technical arrangements to which he has devoted himself, he estimates the practical importance of metaphysical theories by

what has passed in his own mind. We are fully convinced that the bulk of mankind are very little influenced by metaphysical theories; and that even in minds which are more prone to speculation, metaphysical dogmas are seldom so firmly embraced, or so deeply realized, as to be productive of important practical effects. The advocate of necessity, and the champion of liberty, will, in the same state of moral proficiency, act precisely the same part, in similar circumstances. Mr. Belsham, however, in the plenitude of his enthusiasm for the doctrine of philosophical necessity, ascribes, without hesitation, the ruin of multitudes of young persons to their embracing the opposite tenet. It is truly surprising, that he, who was so quick-sighted as to perceive the tendency of the notion of liberty to promote immoral conduct, should entertain no suspicion of a similar tendency in the doctrine of God's being the author of sin, which Mr. B. repeatedly asserts.

"The true solution of the first difficulty," says Mr. B., "whether God be the author of sin, "appears to be this: that God is, strictly speaking, "the author of evil; but that, in the first place, "he never ordains or permits evil but with a view "to the production of a greater good, which could "not have existed without it. And, secondly, that "though God is the author of evil, both natural "and moral, he is not the approver of evil; he "does not delight in it for its own sake; it must "be the object of his aversion, and what he would

" never permit or endure, if the good he intends " could have been accomplished without it. With " respect to the justice of punishment, the best " and only philosophical solution of it is, that, " under the divine government, all punishment is " remedial. Moral evil is the disease, punishment " is the process of cure, of greater or less inten- " sity, and of longer or shorter duration, in pro- " portion to the malignity and inveteracy of the " malady, but, ultimately, of sovereign efficacy, " under the divine government, to operate a per- " fect cure; so that those whose vices have been " the means of proving, purifying, and exalting " the virtues of others, shall, in the end, share " with them in their virtue and their triumph, and " *the impartial justice* and infinite benevolence of " the Divine Being will be made known, adored, " and celebrated, through the whole created uni- " verse."—Pp. 323, 324.

The malignant tendency of such representations as the foregoing is so obvious, that it is quite unnecessary to point it out to our readers. How vain are all precautions against sin, if, in all cases, it is produced by the irresistible power of the Deity! And what motive can remain for avoiding it, if it is certain of being ultimately crowned with happiness and glory! The distinction between producing it, and approving of it for its own sake, with which the doctrine is attempted to be palliated, is perfectly futile; for this is ascribing no more to the Deity than must, in justice, be ascribed to the most

profligate of mankind, who never commit sin for its own sake, but purely with a view to certain advantages with which it is connected: and the difference between the two cases arises not from any distinction in the moral character of the proceeding, but simply from the superior comprehension of view with which the conduct of the Deity is accompanied. As the perpetration of vice is, upon this system, a calamity, not a crime, it is but fitting and necessary it should receive a compensation: and for this Mr. B. has provided, by representing the ultimate happiness of such as have been the means of purifying the virtue of others by their vices, as the effect of the impartial justice of the Deity. Persons of this description are, it seems, a species of benefactors; and it is but right they should, in due time, be rewarded. They are the scavengers of the universe; and, having done a great deal of necessary, though dirty, work, they are entitled to commiseration at present, and to proportionable compensation in another state of being. How admirably are these views adapted to promote a horror of sin! What tenderness of conscience, fear of offending, deep humility and penitence, may we expect to find in Mr. Belsham and in his admirers! Doubtless, their eyes are a fountain of tears, which, like Jeremiah, they are incessantly pouring out for those vices and impieties which are the sure and certain pledges of endless felicity!

To expect Mr. B. to write a bulky volume, without intermingling a large portion of infidelity,

would be to expect grapes of thorns, and figs of thistles. In the work under consideration, he fully maintains the consistency of his character. He more than insinuates his disbelief of a great, if not the greater, part of the Mosaic history. Mr. Lindsey, having expressed himself in terms of just reprehension with respect to the conduct of those who reject the books of Moses, Mr. B. takes upon him to censure the severity of his friend.

"But surely, if the venerable writer," says he, "had reconsidered the case with his usual calmness "and impartiality, he would have seen that a person "may be a very firm believer in the divine mission "and doctrine of Christ, and be well satisfied with "the general evidence of the divine legation of "Moses, while he at the same time may entertain "very serious doubts, whether the books commonly "attributed to Moses were really written through-"out by him, and whether either the narrative or "the institute exist at present exactly in the form "in which he delivered them."—P. 408.

But, supposing the narrative to be in certain points false, the institution misrepresented and disguised, and the books which we term the Pentateuch the production of some unknown author,—who does not see the impossibility of separating the truth from the falsehood, and of attaching, on any consistent principles, to any part of it, the credit due to a divine communication? The spirit of infidelity evinced in these passages is little different from that which pervades the pages of Bolingbroke

and Voltaire. But such is the genuine progress of socinianism: it begins with denying some of the clearest propositions in the New Testament, in order to which its claims to inspiration must be weakened or annulled; whence it proceeds to dispute the authority of the Old, till the whole Bible is virtually set aside as the umpire of controversy. Among the other sublime discoveries to which Mr. B. has been led by a critical investigation of the writings of the New Testament, one is, that the Lord Jesus Christ possesses no authority whatever; or, to use a term of his own invention, no *external* authority. Speaking of the Duke of Grafton, he says—

"In a paper dated Jan. 1, 1792, the duke ex-
"presses a belief that the exaltation of Christ to
"dominion and authority was the consequence of
"his submission to those sufferings which 'were
"so efficacious, perhaps so necessary, to his own
"glory, and to the future happiness of mankind.'
"His mind seems at this time to have been per-
"plexed with some obscure notion of the unscrip-
"tural doctrines of meritorious sufferings, and of
"the external authority of Jesus Christ; which,
"however, he regards as a mystery, which 'it will
"probably never be given to man in the present
"state' to understand, and which therefore 'must
"consequently be ranked among those articles,
"the belief of which cannot be necessary to sal-
"vation.'"—P. 327.

Though the apostles have affirmed the exaltation

of the Saviour to the government of the universe, in every variety of form which language can supply,—though he himself declared that all power was given to him in heaven and in earth,—his possession of external authority is unblushingly asserted to be an unscriptural tenet. We challenge Mr. B. to invent terms more strongly expressive of the highest dominion and authority, than those which the inspired writers have employed in describing the exaltation of the Saviour. We can regard this assertion of Mr. Belsham's in no other light than as a specimen of that theological audacity which forms the principal feature in that gentleman's character, and which, happily, can have no other effect than to inspire a complete abhorrence of the system which renders such a procedure necessary. We cheerfully accept, however, the concession implied in these daring positions, that the doctrine of the meritorious sufferings of Christ is inseparably connected with his exaltation; and as the latter cannot, without the utmost indecency, be denied, the former follows of course. We can annex no other meaning to the epithet *external*, as applied to *authority*, than what might be more clearly expressed by the term *personal;* or, in other words, Mr. B.'s intention is to assert that our Lord possesses no authority whatever, apart from the credit due to his mission and to his doctrine; and that the christian church is in no other sense governed by Christ, than the Jews might be

affirmed to be governed by Moses after his decease. It must be obvious, however, to every one, that this is not to explain, but boldly and unequivocally to contradict, the writings of the apostles on this important subject.

We shall close these strictures on Mr. Belsham, by quoting one passage more, which illustrates, at once, his insufferable arrogance and his servile deference to authority.

"What childish simplicity and ignorance," says he, "does it betray in some, to feign or to feel "alarmed at the tendency of those doctrines which "are avowed by such men as Lindsey, Priestley, "Hartley, and Jebb, and which are represented "by them as lying at the foundation of all right "views of the divine government, of all rational "piety and virtuous practice, and of all rational "and substantial consolation! And yet such per- "sons feel no alarm at the vulgar notion of philo- "sophical liberty, or the power of acting differently "in circumstances precisely similar; a notion, "the fond persuasion of which encourages men "to venture into circumstances of moral danger, "and to which thousands of the young and inex- "perienced especially are daily falling victims."— P. 394.

The arrogance, folly, and absurdity of this passage, are scarcely to be paralleled, even in the writings of its inimitable author. The most celebrated metaphysicians and reasoners, in every age and in every country,—Malebranche, Cudworth,

Clarke, Butler, Chillingworth, Reid, and innumerable others, who have avowed the strongest apprehensions of the immoral tendency of the doctrine of fatalism, or, as it has been styled, philosophical necessity, are consigned by a writer who has not capacity sufficient to appreciate their powers, much less to rival their productions, to the reproach of childish simplicity and ignorance; and this for no other reason than their presuming to differ in opinion from Lindsey, Priestley, Hartley, and Jebb! What is this but to enjoin implicit faith? and why might not a Roman Catholic, with equal propriety, accuse of childish simplicity and ignorance, those who should suspect the pernicious tendency of sentiments held by Pascal, Fenelon, and Bossuet? We must be permitted to remind Mr. B. that we hold his pretensions to a liberal and independent turn of thought extremely cheap; that, possessing nothing original even in his opinions, to say nothing of his genius, his most vigorous efforts have terminated in his becoming a mere trainbearer, in a very insignificant procession.

Having already detained our readers longer on this article than we ought, we should now put a period to our remarks, but that there is one particular connected with the history of Mr. Lindsey, which we conceive has been too often set in such a light as is calculated to produce erroneous impressions. We refer to the resignation of his living, in deference to his religious scruples. He

is, on this account, everywhere designated by Mr. Belsham by the title of "the venerable confessor;" and what is more to be wondered at, the late excellent Job Orton, in a letter to his friend, the late Rev. Mr. Palmer, of Hackney, speaks of him in the following terms:

"'Were I to publish an account of silenced and "ejected ministers, I should be strongly tempted "to insert Mr. Lindsey in the list he mentions "in his Apology with so much veneration. He "certainly deserves as much respect and honour "as any of them for the part he has acted. Per- "haps few of them exceeded him in learning and "piety. I venerate him as I would any of your "confessors. As to his particular sentiments, they "are nothing to me. An honest, pious man, who "makes such a sacrifice to truth and conscience as "he has done, is a glorious character, and de- "serves the respect, esteem, and veneration of "every true christian.'"

We have no scruple in asserting that this unqualified encomium is repugnant to reason, to scripture, and to the sentiments of the best and purest ages of the christian church. To pass over the absurdity of denominating Mr. L. a silenced and ejected minister, merely on account of his voluntary withdrawment from a community, whose distinguishing tenets he had abandoned, we are far from conceiving that the merit attached to his conduct on this occasion was of such an order as to entitle him for a moment to rank with

confessors and martyrs. To the praise of manly integrity for quitting a situation he could no longer conscientiously retain, we are ready to acknowledge Mr. L. fully entitled. We are cordially disposed to admire integrity wherever we perceive it; and we admire it the more in the present instance, because such examples of it, among beneficed ecclesiastics, have been rare. But we cannot permit ourselves to place sacrifices to error on the same footing as sacrifices to truth, without annihilating their distinction. If revealed truth possess any thing of sanctity and importance, the profession of it must be more meritorious than the profession of its opposite; and, by consequence, sacrifices made to that profession must be more estimable. He who suffers in the cause of truth is entitled to our admiration; he who suffers in the defence of error and delusion, to our commiseration: which are unquestionably very different sentiments. If truth is calculated to elevate and sanctify the character, he who cheerfully sacrifices his worldly emolument to its pursuit, must be supposed to have partaken, in no common degree, of its salutary operation. He who suffers equal privations in the propagation of error, evinces, it is confessed, his possession of moral honesty; but unless persuasion could convert error into truth, it is impossible it should impart to error the effects of truth. Previous to the profession of any tenets whatever, there lies an obligation on all, to whom the light of

the gospel extends, to believe the truth. We are bound to confess Christ before men, only because we are bound to believe on him. But if, instead of believing on him, we deny him in his essential characters, which is the case with socinians, the sincerity of that denial will indeed rescue us from the guilt of prevarication, but not from that of unbelief. It is possible, at least, since some sort of faith in Christ is positively asserted to be essential to salvation, that the tenets of the socinians may be such as to exclude that faith: that it does exclude it, no orthodox man can consistently deny; and how absurd it were to suppose a man should be entitled to the reward of a christian confessor, merely for denying, *bona fide*, the doctrine which is essential to salvation! The sincerity which accompanies his profession entitles him to the reward of a confessor: the error of the doctrine which he professes exposes him, at the same time, to the sentence of condemnation as an unbeliever! If we lose sight of socinianism for a moment, and suppose an unbeliever in christianity, *in toto*, to suffer for the voluntary and sincere promulgation of his tenets, we would ask Mr. Orton in what rank he would be inclined to place his infidel confessor. Is *he* entitled to rank with *any* of the confessors? If he is, our Saviour's terms of salvation are essentially altered; and though he pronounces an anathema on him who shall deny him before men, the sturdy and unshaken denial of him in the face of worldly

discouragement, would answer, it seems, as well as a similar confession. Men are left at their liberty in this respect; and they are equally secure of eternal happiness, whether they deny, or whether they confess, the Saviour, providing they do it firmly and sincerely. If these consequences appear shocking, and he be forced to assert the negative, then it is admitted that the truth of the doctrine confessed enters essentially into the inquiry, whether he who suffers for his opinions, is to be, *ipso facto*, classed with christian confessors. Let it be remembered that we are not denying, that he who hazards his worldly interest, rather than conceal or dissemble his tenets, how false or dangerous soever they may be, is an honest man, and, *quoad hoc*, acts a virtuous part,—but that he is entitled to the same kind of approbation with the champion of truth. That the view we have taken of the subject is consonant to the Scriptures, will not be doubted by those who recollect that St. John rests his attachment to Gaius and to the elect Lady, on the truth which dwelt in them; that he professed no christian attachment but for the truth's sake; and that he forbade christians to exercise hospitality, or to shew the least indication of friendship, to those who taught any other doctrine than that which he and his fellow apostles had taught. The source of the confusion and absurdity which necessarily attach to the opinions of Mr. Orton and others, here expressed on this subject, consists in their

confounding together moral sincerity and christian piety. We are perfectly willing to admit that the latter cannot subsist without the former; but we are equally certain that the former is by no means so comprehensive as necessarily to include the latter. We should have imagined it unnecessary to enter into an elaborate defence of so plain a position as this, that it is one thing to be what the world styles an honest man, and another to be a christian—a distinction, obvious as it is, sufficient to solve the whole mystery, and to account for the conduct of Mr. L., without adopting the unmeaning jargon of his biographer, who styles him, in innumerable places, the *venerable confessor*. How repugnant the language we have been endeavouring to expose, is to that which was held in the purest and best ages of the church, must be obvious to all who are competently acquainted with ecclesiastical history. The Marcionites, we are informed by Eusebius, boasted of their having furnished a multitude of martyrs; but they were not the less on that account considered as deniers of Christ. Hence, when orthodox christians happened occasionally to meet at the places of martyrdom with Montanists and Manichæans, they refused to hold the least communion with them, lest they should be supposed to consent to their errors.* In a word, the *nature* of the doctrine professed must be taken into consideration, before

* Euseb. lib. 5. c. 14.

we can determine that profession to be a christian profession; nor is martyrdom entitled to the high veneration justly bestowed on acts of heroic piety, on any other ground than its being, what the term imports, an *attestation of the truth.* It is the saint which makes the martyr, not the martyr the saint.

REVIEW

OF

BIRT ON POPERY.

A Summary of the Principles and History of Popery, in Five Lectures, on the Pretensions and Abuses of the Church of Rome. By JOHN BIRT. 8vo. pp. 176. 1823.

AT a time when popery is making rapid strides, and protestants in general have lost the zeal which once animated them, we consider the publication we have just announced as peculiarly seasonable. What may be the ultimate effect of the efforts made by the adherents of the church of Rome to propagate its tenets, aided by the apathy of the opposite party, it is not for us to conjecture. Certain it is, there never was a period when the members of the papal community were so active and enterprising, or protestants so torpid and indifferent. Innumerable symptoms appear of a prevailing disposition to contemplate the doctrines of popery with less disgust, and to witness their progress with less alarm, than has ever been known since the reformation. All the zeal and activity are on one side; and, while every absurdity is retained, and every pretension

defended, which formerly drew upon popery the indignation and abhorrence of all enlightened christians, we should be ready to conclude, from the altered state of public feeling, that a system once so obnoxious had undergone some momentous revolution. We seem, on this occasion, to have interpreted, in its most literal sense, the injunction of "hoping all things, and believing all things." We persist in maintaining that the adherents to popery are materially changed, in contradiction to their express disavowal: and while they make a boast of the infallibility of their creed, and the unalterable nature of their religion, we persist in the belief of its having experienced we know not what melioration and improvement. In most instances, when men are deceived, it is the effect of art and contrivance on the part of those who delude them; in this, the deception originates with ourselves; and, instead of bearing *false* witness against our neighbour, such is the excess of our candour, that we refuse to credit the unfavourable testimony which he bears of himself.

There is, in the mean time, nothing reciprocal in this strange method of proceeding: we pipe to them, but they will not dance. Our concessions, instead of softening and mollifying, seem to have no other effect upon them, than to elate their pride and augment their arrogance.

An equal change in the state of feeling towards an object which has itself undergone no alteration whatever, and where the party by which it is

displayed profess to adhere to their ancient tenets, it would be difficult to specify. To inquire into the causes of this singular phenomenon, would lead to discussion foreign to our present purpose. Let it suffice to remark, that it may partly be ascribed to the length of time which has elapsed since we have had actual experience of the enormous cruelties of the papal system, and to the fancied security we possess against their recurrence; partly to the agitation of a great political question, which seems to have had the effect of identifying the cause of popery with that of protestant dissenters. The impression of the past has in a manner spent itself; and, in many, its place is occupied by an eagerness to grasp at present advantages, and to lay hold of every expedient for shaking off the restraints which a narrow and timid policy has imposed. The influence of these circumstances has been much aided by that indifference to religious truth which too often shelters itself under the mask of candour: and to such an extent has this humour been carried, that distinguished leaders in parliament have not scrupled to represent the controversy between the papists and the protestants as turning on obscure and unintelligible points of doctrine, scarcely worth the attention of enlightened minds; while a beneficed clergyman of some distinction has treated the whole subject as of no more importance than the idle disputes agitated by the schoolmen. It was but a few

years since, that a celebrated nobleman, in the house of peers, vehemently condemned the oath of abjuration for applying the term *superstitious* to the doctrine of transubstantiation. In exactly the same spirit the appellation of papist is exchanged for catholic,—a concession which the adherents of the church of Rome well know how to improve, as amounting to little short of a formal surrender of the point at issue. For, if the papists are really entitled to the name of *catholics*, protestants of every denomination are involved in the guilt of schism.

This revolution in the feelings of a great portion of the public, has probably been not a little promoted by another cause. The present times are eminently distinguished by the efforts employed for the extension of vital religion: each denomination of christians has taken its station, and contributed its part toward the diffusion of evangelical sentiments. The consequence has been, that the professors of serious piety are multiplied, and form at present a very conspicuous branch of the community. The space which they occupy in the minds of the public, is not merely proportioned to their numerical importance, still less to their rank in society: it is, in a great measure, derived from the publicity of their proceedings, and the numerous associations for the promotion of pious and benevolent objects, which they have originated and supported. By these means, their discriminating doctrines, essential to vital piety, have become

better known, and more fully discussed, than heretofore. However beneficial, as to its general effects, such a state of things may have been, one consequence, which might be expected, has been the result. The opposition of the enemies of religion has become more virulent, their hatred more heated and inflamed, and they have turned with no small complacency to the contemplation of a system which forms a striking contrast to the object of their detestation. Popery, in the ordinary state of its profession, combines the "form of godliness" with a total denial of its power. A heap of unmeaning ceremonies, adapted to fascinate the imagination and engage the senses, — implicit faith in human authority, combined with an utter neglect of divine teaching, — ignorance the most profound, joined to dogmatism the most presumptuous, — a vigilant exclusion of biblical knowledge, together with a total extinction of free inquiry,—present the spectacle of religion lying in state, surrounded with the silent pomp of death. The very absurdities of such a religion render it less unacceptable to men whose decided hostility to truth inclines them to view with complacency, whatever obscures its beauty, or impedes its operation. Of all the corruptions of christianity which have prevailed to any considerable extent, popery presents the most numerous points of contrast to the simple doctrines of the gospel; and just in proportion as it gains ground, the religion of Christ must decline.

On these accounts, though we are far from supposing that popery, were it triumphant, would allow toleration to any denomination of protestants, we have the utmost confidence, that the professors of evangelical piety would be its first victims. The party most opposed to them look to papists as their natural ally, on whose assistance, in the suppression of what they are pleased to denominate fanaticism and enthusiasm, they may always depend: they may, therefore, without presumption, promise themselves the distinction conferred on Ulysses,—that of being last devoured.

Whether popery will ever be permitted, in the inscrutable counsels of heaven, again to darken and overspread the land, is an inquiry in which it is foreign from our province to engage. It is certain that the members of the Romish community are at this moment on the tip-toe of expectation, indulging the most sanguine hopes, suggested by the temper of the times, of soon recovering all that they have lost, and of seeing the pretended rights of their church restored in their full splendour. If any thing can realise such an expectation, it is, undoubtedly, the torpor and indifference of protestants, combined with the incredible zeal and activity of papists; and universal observation shews what these are capable of effecting,—how often they compensate the disadvantages arising from paucity of number, as well as almost every other kind of inequality.

From a settled persuasion that popery still is,

what it always was—a detestable system of impiety, cruelty, and imposture, fabricated by the father of lies—we feel thankful at witnessing any judicious attempt to expose its enormities, and retard its progress. The Lectures, published some years since, by Dr. Fletcher, are well adapted for this purpose, and entitle their excellent author to the esteem and gratitude of the public. The Protestant, a series of periodical papers, composed by Mr. M'Gavin, of Glasgow, contains the fullest delineation of the popish system, and the most powerful confutation of its principles, in a popular style, of any work we have seen. Whoever wishes to see popery drawn to the life, in its hideous wickedness and deformity, will find abundant satisfaction in the pages of that writer.

The author before us has been studious of conciseness, and has contented himself with exhibiting a brief, but a very correct and impressive outline, of that copious subject. As these Lectures were delivered at Manchester, it is probable the author's attention was more immediately directed to it, by witnessing the alarming progress which the tenets of the Romish church are making in that quarter. There is nothing in them, however, of a local nature, or which is calculated to limit their usefulness to any particular part of the kingdom. They are adapted for universal perusal, and entitled to an extensive circulation.

The first Lecture is on the claim of the church of Rome to the appellation of *catholic*, the futility

and absurdity of which the author has exposed, in a concise, but highly satisfactory manner. On this part of the argument, he very acutely remarks, that "no church, which is not coeval with chris- "tianity itself, ought to pretend to be the universal "christian church.

"The contrary sentiment is evidently unreason- "able and absurd; for it supposes, that something "which has already a distinct and complete ex- "istence, may be a part of something else which "is not to come into being until a future period; "or, which is equivalent to this, that what is "entirely the creation of to-day, may include that "which was created yesterday. This would be "in opposition to all analogy; and, therefore, if "the church of Rome had not an earlier com- "mencement than all other christian churches,—if "the origin of that church be not coincident and "simultaneous with the first moment of chris- "tianity,—then the pretension of the church of "Rome to be the 'catholic church' is altogether "vain. Now, it is clear, from the Acts of the "Apostles, that many christian churches flourished "in the East, before the gospel was even preached "at Rome. It was enjoined on the apostles, that "their ministry should begin at Jerusalem; and in "that city the first christian church was actually "constituted. Until the persecution which arose "about the stoning of Stephen, Christ was not "preached beyond the borders of Palestine, and "even then, with a scrupulous discrimination, 'to

"the Jews only.' In fact, churches were formed "in Jerusalem and Judea, at Damascus and "Antioch, and the gospel was sent even into "Ethiopia, before there is any evidence of its "being known at Rome."—Pp. 10, 11.

The second Lecture is an historical exposition of the principal events which led to the elevation of the church of Rome to supremacy: in tracing these, much acumen is evinced, as well as an intimate acquaintance with ecclesiastical history.

The third Lecture consists of a masterly delineation of the genius and characteristics of the papal ascendancy. In this part of the work, the judicious author enters deeply into the interior spirit of popery. After setting in a striking light the seeming impossibilities it had to encounter ere it could accomplish its object, he enumerates the expedients employed for this purpose, under the following heads. The votaries of the papal see succeeded: 1. By enslaving the mental faculties to human authority.—2. By giving to superstition the semblance and sanction of religion.—3. By administering the affairs of their government on the corruptest principles of worldly policy. Each of these topics is illustrated with great judgement, and a copious induction of facts. On the last of these heads, we beg leave to present to our readers the following extract, as a specimen of the style and spirit of this writer.

"'My kingdom is *not* of this world,' saith our "Lord; 'My kingdom *is* of this world,' is truly

"the sentiment of the pope; and here lies the "difference. The only consistent view of this "church, is that of a political establishment, em- "ploying, indeed, religious terms and denomina- "tions, but only as the pretext and colour of an "inordinate pursuit of secular and temporal objects. "Read its history as that of a christian church; "you stumble at every step, and every period "shocks you with the grossest incongruities: read "the same history as one of the kingdoms of this "world; all is natural and easy, and the various "proceedings and events are just what you are "prepared to expect. The papal supremacy was "conceded by an earthly monarch; all its interests "have varied with the fluctuations of human "affairs; and when the princes of this world shall "withdraw their support, it will fall, and 'great "will be the fall thereof.' The bishops of Rome "have ever pursued, under the guise of religion, "some earthly advantage; and thus Pope Leo the "Tenth exclaimed most appropriately, 'O, how "profitable has this fable of Jesus been unto us!'

"The first object of these subtle politicians, was "to provide a revenue, ample and permanent. "Kings and nations were accordingly laid under "tribute; and to the utmost extent of papal in- "fluence, the treasures of Christendom flowed into "the exchequer of Rome. On every hand, art, "fraud, and intimidation, were equally and suc- "cessfully employed, in transferring the wealth of "the world to the coffers of the church.

"This was effected partly by regular eccle-
"siastical taxes, but principally by selling every
"thing the church of Rome had to bestow, and
"by perpetually inventing new articles of bargain
"and sale. Hence the multiplying of sacraments;
"hence the sale of pardons, indulgences, benefices,
"dignities, and of prayers for the living and the
"dead. Every thing was prostituted; and under
"the pretence of being the 'bride, the Lamb's
"wife,' this church became the 'mother of harlots.'
"In the same spirit, the death-beds of the rich
"were besieged, that they might bequeath their
"property to the clergy; and the consciences of
"opulent criminals were appeased, in return for
"liberal donations to ecclesiastical funds. Thus
"an amount of riches almost incredible accrued
"to the papal treasury."—Pp. 94—96.

The fourth Lecture is occupied by giving a rapid sketch of the most interesting events in the past history of the Romish community. We have seldom, if ever, seen so large a body of facts exhibited with perfect perspicuity within so small a compass: the author's complete mastery of the subject appears from the ease with which he has condensed an immense mass of historical matter, without the least indication of disorder or confusion.

The last of these Lectures presents an animated and instructive view of the prospects which are opening on the christian church, and the probable issue of the causes and events which are in present operation.

The notice we have taken of this publication will, we trust, induce our readers to avail themselves of the instruction and the pleasure which an attentive perusal cannot fail to bestow. It is distinguished for precision and comprehension of thought, energy of diction, and the most enlarged and enlightened principles of civil and religious freedom; nor should we find it easy to name a publication, which contains, within the same compass, so much information on the subject which it professes to treat. A little redundance of ornament, and excess in the employment of figurative language, are excrescences very pardonable in a young writer, and which more mature years and experience may be safely left to correct. On the whole, we cannot dismiss the work before us, without sincerely congratulating the author on that happy combination of philosophical discrimination with christian piety, which it throughout displays.

MISCELLANEOUS PIECES,

COLLECTED FROM

DIFFERENT SOURCES.

FRAGMENT ON POPERY.

[Written about 1824. Not published before.]

When two parties, each formidable for their numbers, and the weight of their influence and property, are animated by an equal degree of zeal, it is natural to anticipate the final success of that which possesses the most inherent strength. But if one be torpid and inactive, and the other eager and enterprising,—if one reposes on its arms, while the other is incessantly on the alert,—such a difference in their spirit is sufficient to annihilate the greatest disparity of force, and to incline the balance to the side on which superior vigour is exerted. This, if I am not greatly mistaken, is pretty nearly the case at present between the protestants and the papists, as far, at least, as respects their situation in these kingdoms. The papists appear to be stimulated by zeal and elevated by hope; the protestants content themselves with being silent spectators of their progress, while many of them seem secretly to rejoice at their success. New popish chapels are rising on every side, in situations skilfully selected, with a view

to attract the public attention. The consecration is announced with ostentatious publicity, and numerously attended by the most elegant and fashionable part of a protestant population, by men of opulence, merchants, and magistrates, who are seen on no other occasions beyond the precincts of the established [church.]

Judging from the practice of a multitude in the higher classes, we are necessitated to infer, that, if the popish doctrine is not true, it is innocent and harmless; and, if not entitled to an exclusive preference, it is only inferior to that particular form of the protestant worship which they have adopted; and that, while they decline submission to its claims, it possesses a majesty which entitles it to their occasional homage and veneration. The honest fervour of indignation with which its pretensions were repelled and its impiety resented, has disappeared: popery is now viewed by the greater part of the people with careless indifference or secret complacency.

But popery, it is alleged, is changed; its venom is exhaled; and, however erroneous in a speculative view, it is no longer fraught with the mischief and the danger which rendered it so formidable to our ancestors. *An infallible religion changed,* is nearly a contradiction in terms. A religion which is founded on the assumption of a supernatural exemption from error, on the part of its adherents, may be confuted by argument, suppressed by force, or relinquished from conviction; but it is

impossible to conceive of its susceptibility of change. If it undergoes any alteration, it can only [be] in consequence of its professors renouncing some one or more of the doctrines which formerly characterised it. But those doctrines are neither more nor less than the recorded divisions of the church, of a church affirmed by all catholics to be infallible. The supposed infallibility of the church is the corner-stone of the whole system of popery, the centre of union amidst all the animosities and disputes which may subsist on minor subjects; and the proper definition of a catholic is one who professes to maintain the absolute infallibility of a certain community styling itself the church. For a person to dissent from a single decision of the church, is to confess himself not a catholic; because it is to affirm not only that the church may err, but that it actually has erred, and is, therefore, not infallible. An infallibility, extending to some points of religious belief, and not to others, is a ridiculous chimera, which, could it be reduced to an object of conception, would subvert every rational ground of confidence: for what assurance can we have, that a community which has erred once will not fall into the same predicament again? Positive qualities may be conceived to subsist under [all] possible degrees of magnitude; they are susceptible, to an unlimited extent, of *more* or *less*: but infallibility is a negative idea, which admits of no degrees. Detect the smallest error in the individual, or the community, which makes

this pretension, and you as effectually destroy it as by the discovery of a million. If a catholic, then, professes to have changed his opinions, on any subject on which the authority of the church has been interposed, so as to dissent from its decisions, he has relinquished catholicism, and renounced the only principle which distinguished him.

The supposed dominion over the consciences of men, assumed by the Roman pontiff, is sanctioned by the decision of general councils, and incorporated with their most solemn and public acts, and must consequently be allowed to constitute one of the fundamental tenets of the papal system; and, though that usurpation, considered in itself, would be a mere enunciation of a doctrine which might be rejected with impunity, the interference of the civil magistrate, to enforce the papal claims, was countenanced and demanded by the same authority. Beyond the narrow precincts of their temporal domain, the bishops of Rome were incapable of personally carrying their persecuting edicts into force; but princes and magistrates were diligently instructed that it was their indispensable duty to suppress and punish the heretics against whom the church had denounced its anathemas. Ecclesiastics, affecting a peculiar horror of blood, declined the office of executioners, which they devolved on the temporal authorities in each state; but it is equally certain, that, in the violences which [civil magistrates] committed in the suppression of heresy, and the support of the authority of the

church, they acted not merely agreeably to her wishes, but in obedience to her dictates. If there was any difference, in this respect, between the ecclesiastical and temporal powers, it was, that princes could, with great difficulty, on many occasions, be induced to keep [pace] with the prompt and unrelenting fury of their spiritual directors. The grand lesson in which they [were] indoctrinated, with infinitely more care than any other, was the implicit obedience which they vowed to the pontiff and the church, in the enactment and execution of penal laws against the abettors of heretical opinions; an epithet bestowed upon all opinions not in accordance with the tenets of the papal community. When John Huss, the Bohemian reformer, was arrested, cast into prison, and publicly burnt alive at Constance, in spite of a "safe-conduct" given him by the Emperor Sigismund, merely because he refused to belie his conscience by abjuring his pretended heresy; all was executed under the eyes, and by the express authority, of the council, who solemnly decreed that the safe-conduct of the emperor ought to be considered as no impediment to the exercise of ecclesiastical jurisdiction, but, notwithstanding, that it was perfectly competent for the ecclesiastical judge to take cognizance of his errors, and to *punish* them agreeable to the dictates of justice, although he presented himself before them in dependence upon that protection but for which he would have declined appearing. Nor were they satisfied with

this impious decision [alone.] Because murmurs were heard, on account of the violation of a legal protection, they had the audacity to add, that, since the said John Huss had, by impugning the orthodox faith, forfeited every privilege, and since no promise or faith was binding, either by human or divine right, in prejudice of the catholic faith, the said emperor had done as became his royal majesty in violating his "safe-conduct," and that whoever, of any rank or sex, dares to impugn the justice of the holy council, or of his majesty, in relation to their proceedings with John Huss, shall be punished, without hope of pardon, as a favourer of heretical pravity, and guilty of the crime of high treason.*

* Though I have nearly translated the language of the holy council, as given by L'Enfant in his History of the Council of Constance, the reader will probably not be displeased to see the original.

" Præsens sancta synodus ex quovis salvo-conductu per imperatorem, reges, et alios, seculi principes hæreticis vel de hæresi diffamatis, putantes eosdem sic à suis erroribus revocare, quocunque vinculo se adstrinxerint, concesso, nullum fidei catholicæ vel jurisdictioni ecclesiasticæ præjudicium generari, vel impedimentum præstari posse seu debere, declarat; quominus salvo dicto conductu nonobstante, liceat judici competenti ecclesiastico de ejusmodi personarum erroribus inquirere, et aliàs contra eas debite procedere, easdemque punire, quantum justitia suadebit, si suos pertinaciter recusaverint revocare errores, etiamsi de salvo-conductu confisi ad locum venerint judicii, aliàs non venturi.

" Quo statuto, sive ordinatione lecto, idem statutum fuit approbatum per dictos dominos episcopos nomine quatuor nationum, ac Reverendissimum Patrem Dominum Cardinalem Vivariensem, nomine Collegii Cardinalium, per verbum, *Placet.*

" DE

Here, then, we have the decision of a general council, that a dissent from the catholic faith, persisted in, exposes the offender to the forfeiture of all his rights, not excepting such as he may claim from express solemn stipulations. If there ever was an assembly fairly entitled to the epithet of œcumenical, or universal, it was certainly the Council of Constance; composed of delegates from every kingdom and country of Europe; held in the presence of an emperor, and many other sovereign princes; called by the order of a pope, and

"DE SALVO-CONDUCTU HUSSONIS.

"Sacrosancta, &c. Quia nonnulli nimis intelligentes aut sinistræ intentionis, vel forsan solentes sapere plus quàm oportet, nedum regiæ majestati, sed etiam sacro, ut fertur, concilio, linguis maledictis detrahunt publicè et occultè dicentes, vel innuentes, quod salvus-conductus per invictissimum principem Dominum Sigismundum Romanorum et Ungariæ, &c., Regem, quondam Johanni Hus, heresiarchæ damnatæ memoriæ datus, fuit contra justitiam aut honestatem indebitè violatus; cumtamen dictus Johannes Hus fidem orthodoxam pertinaciter impugnans se ab omni conductu et privilegio reddiderit alienum, nec aliqua sibi fides aut promissio, de jure naturali, divino, vel humano, fuerit in præjudicium Catholicæ fidei observanda: idcirco dicta sancta synodus præsentium tenore declarat: dictum invictissimum principem circa prædictum quondam Johannem Hus, non-obstante memorato salvo-conductu, ex juris debito fecisse quod licuit, et quod decuit regiam majestatem: statuens et ordinans omnibus et singulis Christi fidelibus, cujuscunque dignitatis, gradus, præeminentiæ, conditionis, status, aut sexus existant, quod nullus deinceps sacro concilio aut regiæ majestati de gestis circa prædictum quondam Johannem Hus detrahat, sive quomodolibet obloquatur. Qui verò contrarium fecerit, tamquam fautor hereticæ pravitatis et reus criminis læsæ majestatis irremissibiliter puniatur."—*L'Enfant's History of the Council of Constance*, vol. ii. p. 491, English edit. 1730.

signalized by the absolute deposition of two pontiffs, a forced abdication of a third, and the creation of a fourth; which extinguished a schism of forty years, and reunited the obedience of Christendom under one head. If the boasted infallibility of the church is to be found anywhere, it is undoubtedly in the acts and decrees of such an assembly.

Nor is it easy to conceive of any thing more absurd, than the supposition, that it was guided by inspiration in respect to some of its decisions, and not of others. Such a partial and capricious inspiration would completely frustrate the purpose for which it was introduced, and expose us to all the perplexity and uncertainty which it was designed to prevent; since, on this supposition, nothing short of another inspiration could enable us to distinguish and select the suggestions of the first.

I am aware that, when catholics are pressed with the consequences resulting from the pretended infallibility of general councils, summoned by the authority of the pope, they take refuge in the subtle and slippery distinction between the doctrines which are, and those which are not, points of faith. Thus, in the present instance, to serve a turn, they will probably assert, or insinuate, that, although the most cruel intolerance has obtained the sanction and support of general councils, their *proper* infallibility is not impaired, because the principle which authorizes persecution is not a *point of faith*.

Without entering into the mazes of a frivolous and unintelligible dispute about words, it is sufficient to remark, that the supernatural and infallible guidance of a church, which leaves it to stumble on the threshold of morality, to confound the essential distinctions of right and wrong, to recommend the violation of the most solemn compacts, and the murder of men against whom not a shadow of criminality is alleged, except a dissent from its dogmas, is nothing worth; but must ever ensure the ridicule and abhorrence of those who judge the tree by its fruits, and who will not be easily persuaded, that the eternal fountain of love and purity inhabits the breast which "breathes out cruelty and slaughter." If persecution for conscience sake is contrary to the principles of justice and the genius of christianity; then, I say, this holy and infallible church was so abandoned of God, as to be permitted to legitimate the foulest crimes,—to substitute murders for sacrifice, and to betray a total ignorance of the precepts and spirit of the religion which she professed to support; and whether the Holy Ghost condescended, at the same moment, to illuminate one hemisphere of minds so hardened, and hearts so darkened, may be safely left to the judgement of common sense.*

* Shortly after the execution of Huss, a letter, written to the council, in the name of the Holy Ghost, was found at the gates of some of the churches at Constance, to this effect: "The Holy Spirit to the Council of Constance, greeting. Take care of your own affairs as well as you can. For our part we cannot be with you; for we are busy about other affairs: farewell."—Etc.

It would give us unfeigned pleasure to find, that the catholics have, in good earnest, renounced the intolerant principles of their predecessors; but when we look around for some proof of this, we see nothing that is satisfactory. In the midst of much courtesy, much urbanity and address, we meet with nothing that partakes of the nature of solid concession;—no steps retraced, no errors revoked, no protest opposed to the persecuting maxims of former times. Whatever breathes an air of liberality, issues from the unofficial communications of private individuals. We anxiously wish for some important concessions at the fountain-head,—some exposition of the catholic faith from the supreme pontiff, or his accredited agents, calculated to satisfy us that intolerance is at last expunged from the papal creed. We wish, but we wish in vain. On the contrary, we perceive, in the restoration of the jesuits,—in the total suppression (as far as his [the pope's] influence extends) of Bible societies,—in his opposition to the toleration established in Belgium,—in the exclusion of the protestant religion from Spain and Portugal, at the very moment they were indebted for their existence to the arms of protestants,—decisive evidence of a determination to maintain the ancient system with inflexible rigour. We are at a loss to discover a single concession in favour of the claims of conscience, proceeding from an authority which catholics are bound to respect. The renunciation of the rights of the pope to

interfere in temporal matters, and the inviolable obligation of oaths taken to heretics, will be considered perhaps, by some, as important concessions; but they are far from settling the question. What security have we, that the persecuting maxims of popery are revoked, or that the consciences of its adherents are not still instructed in the indispensable duty of demanding the interference of the magistrate in the suppression and punishment of heresy?

The fundamental principle of the catholic system is, the supposed infallibility of the church of Rome. Until this point is determined, it is to little purpose to engage in particular controversies, or attempt to expose the erroneousness of her doctrines, or the idolatry of her worship. These are merely a superstructure erected without foundation.

As it is the design of the following pages to furnish a popular antidote to the seductions of her priests and advocates, it becomes indispensably necessary to examine the pleas by which her pretension to infallibility is attempted to be supported. This is the more requisite, because there is reason to fear that multitudes of protestants are, in a great measure, ignorant of the *true grounds* of popery; and that, while they strongly reprobate, in detail, its errors and absurdities, having little or no acquaintance with the principle which forms the keystone of the whole system, they are easily liable to be baffled and confounded when they

encounter a subtle disputant. It will be in vain for you to urge, in debating with a catholic, the absurdity of transubstantiation, or the idolatry of the mass. You begin the controversy at the wrong end; and though you accumulate ever so large a pile of invincible argument, or scriptural proof, you make no progress. He will [seldom, if ever,] descend to meet you on that ground; he professes to prostrate both his reason and his faith before the majesty of the church. In the mysteries of faith the dictates of reason are fallacious, the interpretation of the Scriptures is precarious and uncertain, and no basis of a divine and supernatural faith can be laid, but in submission to an authorized infallible guide,—which guide is the Roman Catholic Church! You will be reminded of the innumerable sects and schisms, convulsions and disorders, which have sprung from the exercise of a pretended free inquiry; whence he will infer the necessity of some visible standard of appeal, some acknowledged infallible judge: and the promise of the Spirit to the apostles to lead them into all truth,—together with the preeminence of Peter above his colleagues; to whom, as an immovable rock and foundation of the church, "the keys of the kingdom of heaven" were exclusively assigned, —will be triumphantly urged to support the claims of the bishop of Rome, his legitimate representative and successor. Thus, by a mixture of specious probabilities, with the assumption of innumerable facts, a web of sophistry will be weaved,

sufficient, often, to entangle the "unlearned and unstable." That it is nothing more, however, than unfounded and presumptuous sophistry, a little attention will enable us to perceive.

That the church is infallible is not a self-evident proposition; it is not one of those truths which are acknowledged the moment they are announced, like the assertion that two and two are four. It must therefore be *proved:* nor can it be proved by her own assertion; because it is just as easy for any other community to declare itself infallible as for the church of Rome. To allow her a prerogative so extraordinary, merely because she claims it, would legitimate the boldest imposture. As little can it be proved by any appeal to the principles of reason: the possession of infallibility by an individual, or by a number of individuals, is a matter of fact, whose truth must be evinced in the same manner as other facts. Hence it necessarily follows, that the pretensions to infallibility, assumed by the catholic church, must solely rest on the testimony of scripture. For this purpose it is alleged, that St. Peter was constituted the prince of the apostles, the foundation on which the church was to be built; that to him were primarily and chiefly given the keys of the kingdom of heaven; that as Jesus Christ prayed for him that his faith should not fail, he possessed a guarantee for the truth of his doctrines, and the infallibility of his decisions; and that, having established his episcopal throne at Rome, he

transmitted his immunities and prerogatives unimpaired to his successors in that see.

Such, for substance, is the argument deduced from scripture in support of this extraordinary pretension. To this are added other considerations of the nature of probabilities, in favour of this assumed infallibility: such as the pretended necessity of some living standard of appeal, some visible judge of controversies, together with the error, confusion, and uncertainty, to which it is asserted the church must be for ever abandoned, in the absence of some such living oracle. If christians are left to interpret the Scriptures for themselves, without an infallible guidance, their interpretations will necessarily vary in proportion to the different degrees of their capacity or attention. Their interpretation can, at best, be but probable; and a probable conclusion can never be admitted as the ground of a divine faith. It will not be at all necessary to discuss accurately, at large, the arguments founded on the passages of scripture before adduced. Suffice it to observe, that the links which compose the chain of the argument are numerous, and that it would not be easy to prove any one of them to the satisfaction of an unprejudiced inquirer. In that argument it is assumed for granted, that St. Peter was invested with a supremacy over the rest of the apostles; that the keys were *exclusively* given to him; that his faith was more indefectible than that of his brethren; that he exercised the episcopal office

at Rome; and that he devolved his peculiar power and prerogatives on his successors in that sacred office. Every one of these arbitrary assumptions is destitute of a shadow of truth, either from scripture or antiquity. That Peter was *ever* at Rome, we have no evidence but vague and uncertain tradition; that he exercised the episcopal functions there, is still more uncertain, or rather extremely improbable, as it is neither insinuated in scripture, nor very consistent with his higher character and functions. But, supposing both these points were conceded, what evidence have we of that devolution of his power and prerogatives on his successors, on which the authority assumed by the bishop of Rome entirely rests? From the language of scripture and the [testimony] of antiquity, there is much more reason for affirming that James the Less was bishop of the church of Jerusalem, than that Peter sustained that office at Rome; and, by a parity of reason, his successors must be supposed to have inherited his powers and his infallibility; and the rather, since the church at Jerusalem was the mother of all other churches, planted, not by one, but by all the apostles, often dignified by their united presence,—a church on which the redundance of spiritual gifts was first poured and consecrated by the blood of the first martyr. If, in opposition to this, we are reminded that the succeeding bishops of Jerusalem derived from St. James the rights attached to the episcopal function, but not his personal prerogatives

and immunities as an apostle,—this very distinction applies precisely to the successors of St. Peter.

This may suffice to shew the extreme frivolity and levity of the proofs adduced from scripture, in support of the claim of papal or catholic infallibility. But, admitting the arguments derived from this quarter were much more cogent than they are, it is evident that they are entirely deduced from the interpretation of certain passages of scripture, and consequently depend on the correctness of that interpretation. Is this interpretation, I would ask, to be taken for granted, or is it to be proved and sustained by the principles of sound criticism? Are we to take the mere affirmation of the church of Rome on this subject, and at once admit that the inference she deduces from these passages is just because she asserts it to be so? This is impossible, because this would [be to] acknowledge her infallibility, which is the very point to be proved. We are inquiring after the *proofs* of her infallibility: she refers us for satisfaction to the passages of scripture before adduced. Her supposed infallibility can afford no sort of security for her correct interpretation of these passages, because her object in urging these passages is to prove her infallibility. To say that she has put a right construction on these texts because she is infallible, and at the same time attempt to prove her infallibility by that construction, would be an insult to common sense. Her right to be acknowledged as the infallible

guide and director of our faith, must either be blindly submitted to without proof or inquiry, or it must be left to be determined by the private judgement of every individual; and, if the votaries of the church of Rome are not willing to confess they admit the validity of her claims, without any reasons whatever, they must have exercised the right of free inquiry as well as protestants, not indeed in respect to particular controversies, but in relation to this great controversy—What is the standard of truth, and who is the judge of controversy? The church of Rome boldly affirms, that if individuals are left to judge for themselves, such is the obscurity of scripture, that no certainty could be obtained, no conclusion deduced, in which the conscience may safely rest. Yet, with egregious inconsistency, she refers us to that very scripture in proof of the justice of her claims. Here, I would ask, can we without an infallible guide attain the real meaning of the texts which she quotes in her favour? If not, it is impossible for them to prove her infallibility. If we can, then it follows that there are some parts of scripture whose meaning may be certainly ascertained without her infallible guidance. And what, then, becomes of her complaint of the hopeless obscurity of scripture, which is affirmed to render her aid so indispensable? And what must we think of her outcries against the supposed arrogance of pretending to the exercise of free inquiry, and of judging of the Scriptures for ourselves, when,

without such an exercise and such a power of judging, it is found impossible to obtain the least proof or presumption of her boasted infallibility?

Some parts of scripture, then, the church of Rome herself must allow, are capable of being understood without her aid. Those declarations of scripture on which she rests her claim to implicit submission and obedience, she *must* allow to be sufficiently plain and intelligible, to bind the conscience of every member of her community who is prepared to assign a reason for his being a catholic: and as an entire agreement with the dogmas of the church is all the faith which she requires in order to the salvation of her members, she must acknowledge, as well as ourselves, that the Scriptures contain a rule of faith sufficient for the purpose of salvation; the only difference is, that in our opinion the scripture clearly unfolds a system of saving truth, while in [that of the Roman Catholics] they are obscure in every point, except in the few passages which direct us to the church, the only authentic and immediate source of saving knowledge.

We ascribe some efficacy to the word of God itself; while they contend, that the principal or only benefit it affords consists in conducting us to the church. The Scriptures themselves, indeed, affirm, that they are "able to make us wise unto salvation," and by them "we must be judged at the last day." The church asserts on the contrary, that they are covered with an impenetrable

obscurity [not to be removed] without her interference, and that we shall be judged at the last day, not by our submission *to the Scriptures,* but our obedience *to her.* In her system the principal use of the Scriptures was to give birth to the church, whose place she now occupies, whose prerogatives she assumes as the sole directory of conscience, and the living oracle of God. Her treatment of the scripture almost reminds us of the fabulous history of Jupiter, who ascended to supreme [power] by the mutilation and banishment of his father.

The portentous doctrine of infallibility, as it is employed in the catholic church, stamps an entirely new character on the christian religion, substitutes a new object of faith and dependence, deifies what is human, hides and cancels what is divine, and transfers our allegiance from God to mortals.

But to return to the argument.—On all systems, the preference of one religion to another must either be founded on caprice, custom, or some other principle equally unworthy of determining the choice of a reasonable being, or upon examination. If the catholics wish to convert us to their persuasion, they must assign their reasons for affirming that there is in existence an infallible community, styling itself the church; that that community is their church, in preference to the Greek church, the Armenian, or the Nestorian. Here they must admit the exercise of private judgement in examining these reasons, unless they have the

effrontery to assert that their bare affirmation supersedes the necessity of any further proof: and, admitting the Scriptures to be the word of God, which is the easiest task for ordinary christians—to learn from them what is necessary for salvation, or to judge of the claims of the church to supremacy and infallibility? For the former, if you believe the Scriptures themselves, nothing more is requisite than a candid and honest mind; for the latter, a deep acquaintance with history and antiquity, and, particularly, a clear comprehension of the meaning of a portion of scripture, by no means the most plain and perspicuous. Involved as those passages are which are urged from the New Testament in support of the papal claims, in language highly figurative and metaphorical, is it easier for a plain unlettered christian to judge of the precise meaning of the term "keys," and "the kingdom of heaven opening and shutting," than to learn the import of that declaration, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved?" There is so much room for variation in the interpretation of the passages [on which the papists lay such great stress,] that it would not be easy to find two commentators, in any community, whose expositions perfectly coincide; with respect to the latter, he that runs may read. St. John distinctly informs us with what purpose he wrote his gospel, in the following words: "And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written that ye

might believe that Jesus is the Christ, and that believing ye might have life through his name." Is there sufficient evidence in what St. John wrote, to convince us that Jesus is the Christ; and is it within the power of ordinary men to judge of this evidence? If this question be answered in the affirmative, then what occasion is there for the interposition of an infallible interpreter, since he who is convinced by this record that Jesus is the Christ, is already in a state of salvation? If it be replied in the negative, that the writing of St. John is not sufficient to prove to an impartial reader that Jesus is the Christ, it must be confessed, however reluctantly, that the beloved apostle was a most impertinent and fallacious writer, in representing his performance as a fit instrument for the accomplishment of an object to which it is not adequate.

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THE CHARACTER OF THE REV. R. HALL,

OF ARNSBY.

[WRITTEN IN 1791.*]

THE distinguished talents of our deceased friend will long live in the remembrance of all who knew him. His advantages of education were extremely small; but possessing, from his infancy, a contemplative cast of mind, and a habit of patient thinking, he laid in a large stock of useful knowledge. In the character of a minister of the gospel, there have been but few more generally esteemed. Attentive only to the improvement of his hearers, he forgot himself, and appeared entirely absorbed in his subject. Though he was unacquainted with the graces of oratory, and the embellishments of language, scarcely any man spoke with a more striking and visible effect. From nature he derived a large share of sensibility; and, as he excelled at the same time in taking a profound and comprehensive view of a subject, the understanding and affections of his hearers were equally interested in his discourses,

* This sketch was published anonymously, at the end of Dr. Ryland's funeral sermon for Mr. Hall, of Arnsby.—ED.

which generally flowed in a stream of argument and pathos. From a natural diffidence of temper, heightened by a consciousness of his want of education, he often ascended the pulpit with tremour; but, as soon as this subsided, he generally led his hearers, step by step, into a large field of serious and manly thinking, kindled as he advanced, and expatiated with increasing energy and conviction till the subject was exhausted. His eminent piety lent a peculiar unction to the sentiments he delivered, led him to seize the most interesting views of every subject, and turned topics, which in the hands of others would have furnished barren speculation only, into materials for devotion and prayer. He appeared to the greatest advantage upon subjects where the faculties of most men fail them; for the natural element of his mind was greatness. At times he seemed to labour with conceptions too big for his utterance; and, if an obscurity ever pervaded his discourses, it must be traced to this source, the disproportion of his language to the vastness of his conceptions. He had great force without ornament, and grandeur without correctness. His ministry, in the hands of God, was effectual to the conversion of great numbers; and in this particular he was distinguished in a manner not very common; for the last years of his life were the most successful. But it was not only in the pulpit that he shone; in his private sphere of action, as a christian, his virtues were not less distinguished than his talents as a minister.

Deep devotion and unaffected humility entered far into this part of his character. Few men have passed through greater vicissitudes of life than the deceased, and perhaps, in each of them, no man preserved with a more inviolable consistency the character of a christian. He was very early introduced into the school of affliction, and the greater part of his subsequent life was distinguished by an uncommon succession of trials and distresses. On his first entrance into the ministry his fortitude was exercised in a scene of persecution and reproaches, which lasted for many years. His worldly prospects, at the same time, were gloomy and precarious in a high degree: he had a very numerous family, and an income extremely limited. — He united great susceptibility of heart with firmness of mind; and, endowed with these dispositions, he met reproaches with gentleness, sustained adversity with fortitude, and pains and sorrows of various kinds with exemplary patience. In the habitual frame of his spirit he "walked with God." The consolations that supported him through life awaited him at death; for so tranquil were his last moments, so completely was he reconciled to the prospect of both worlds, that he declared, a little time before he expired, he *would not give a straw either to live or die.* From his first acquaintance with religion, to the close of his life, he was never known to express the least hesitation respecting his state, but enjoyed an uninterrupted assurance of a happy immortality. His conversation breathed

so much of heaven, was so tinctured with the very spirit of religion, that none could enjoy it without an opportunity of being made better. It was evident to all who knew him, that his religion was not a transient impression, but a permanent principle; that it blended itself with all his feelings and his actions; and that it raised his thoughts, his views, and his passions towards heaven.

In the first years of his ministry, he encountered, as has been already remarked, much persecution and reproach; but, at length, his exemplary conduct dissipated these prejudices, and gained him so completely the esteem of all classes of mankind, that it may be doubted whether he had an enemy in the world: certainly he had none but those whom his piety made such. He was distinguished as a lover of peace, and was as anxious to heal breaches as he was cautious to avoid them. With some, his extreme solicitude for the propagation of evangelical sentiments might seem like bigotry: but those who knew him best were well convinced that this was no part of his character, and that he regarded sentiments in no other light, nor cherished them in any higher degree, than as he conceived them favourable to the interests of holiness and virtue.

His brethren in the ministry will long and deeply lament him; for to them his talents and dispositions peculiarly endeared him. How many private circles hath he cheered and enlightened by his presence! In how many public solemnities

hath he lifted up an ensign to the people, invited them to the standard of the cross, and warmed and exalted their affections, whilst "his doctrine dropped as rain, and his speech distilled as the dew!" Great abilities are often allied to pride; but the character of the deceased was an illustrious exception to this rule. His talents and virtues were in some measure concealed from the world, and almost entirely from himself, by a veil of the most unaffected modesty. He was never so happy as when he was permitted to sit in the shade, though the high opinion entertained of his abilities seldom allowed him that indulgence. It would be difficult to conceive a human mind more completely purged from the leaven of pride or of envy than was that of our deceased friend. In this particular his magnanimity was so great, that he seemed on all occasions desirous of sinking the recollection of himself in the reputation and applause of his contemporaries. To cultivate the seeds of reflection and improvement in the minds of his inferiors,—to behold the growing talents and virtues of his brethren,—to draw merit from its obscurity, and give confidence to timid worth,—formed some of the highest satisfactions of his life.

His temper was grave and contemplative, yet few men took greater delight in christian society; and on these occasions he seldom failed to mix with serious converse a vein of pleasantry and humour, in which he greatly excelled. From his integrity and knowledge, it may be inferred he

was eminently skilled for imparting advice; yet so carefully did he shun every inclination to dictate, that he scarcely ever gave it unsolicited. His sentiments, when required, he imparted with tenderness and freedom; but he never made advice a disguise for arrogance, or an engine of rule, nor ever presumed to think himself affronted if his counsels were not followed. In his whole deportment, prudence and humility were conspicuous; a prudence, however, that was candid and manly, as far removed from *art* as his humility was from meanness. He had failings, no doubt, (for who is free?) but they were scarcely ever suffered to influence his conduct, or to throw even a transient shade over the splendour of his character. Upon the whole, if a strong and penetrating genius, simplicity of manners, integrity of heart, fidelity in friendship,—and all these virtues consecrated by piety the most ardent and sincere on the high altar of devotion,—have any claim to respect, the memory of the deceased will long be cherished with tears of admiration and sorrow by those who knew him.

FUNERAL ORATION,

DELIVERED AT THE INTERMENT OF THE REV. HABAKKUK CRABB, OF ROYSTON, IN HERTFORDSHIRE, ON THE FIRST OF JAN. 1795.*

AMONG the many appearances which man presents to the view of a contemplative mind, death is one of the most extraordinary. Whatever be the station he has filled, and however he has conducted himself in it,—whether he has adorned it by virtue, or degraded it by vice,—whether he has passed obscurely through the world, or filled it with the fame of his actions,—he soon disappears, and the "place which once knew him, knows him no more." Over all the sons of Adam death hath reigned. The worthy and beneficent are embalmed by the tears of tender but transient regret. The chasm their departure has occasioned in society is filled up by their successors, who tread the same circle of life and death, and thus perpetuate the established order of the universe.

But though the grave terminates the business of life, it does not terminate the inquiries of the

* This first appeared in the introduction to a volume of Mr. Crabb's posthumous Sermons, published in 1795.—ED.

living. Whether the whole of existence is comprised within the present life, or whether it be merely a passage into an unseen state, is a question which has engaged the attention of men in every age; nor would it be possible (were it ever so proper) to detail, within the limits of this address, the various reasonings and conjectures to which it has given occasion. When we contemplate death under its sensible appearances,—the destruction of the external organs, and the corruption of the whole mass,—we are tempted to regard it as the extinction of being, and to suppose its effects upon the human race are the same as upon the inferior orders of creatures. Whatever has been the object of the senses, in both, is reduced to putrefaction and dust. But when, again, we recollect, in how many important respects we are distinguished above the brutes, we cannot help indulging higher expectations, and looking for a nobler destiny. Our superior comprehension of mind qualifies us for a longer duration of being. While the brute is capable of enjoying little more than the present moment, the remembrance of what is past, and the anticipation of what is to come, enable us to multiply our resources, and to diffuse our existence, if I may so speak, over a larger surface. To compare one state of being with another, to learn wisdom from experience, and to regulate our future expectations by what has already occurred, are employments congenial with the human mind. But it is evident

that a creature, possessed of such faculties, will be capable of continually making new acquisitions of knowledge, and of advancing nearer and nearer to perfection.

Among all the tribes of creatures with which we are acquainted, man is the only one that appears to have any dread of annihilation, or the remotest conception of another state. How shall we account for the universal prevalence of these sentiments, in spite of all the sensible appearances of death, unless they are either the vestige of some early revelation, or the incorrupted dictate of nature? How is it that we are the only beings that extend their anxieties beyond the grave; that we are so reluctant to quit the present scene; and that, when we are at length compelled to depart, we grasp at the very shadow of immortality, and console ourselves with the hope of surviving in the regrets of our friends, and the reputation of our actions?

Though there seems to be much plausibility in these topics, it must be confessed, the best arguments for a future state are derived from the moral part of our nature; or, in other words, from our capability of good and ill desert. For, since it is plain that God has made us moral agents, and placed us under a law, we may be assured he has not made us so in vain, but that he will call us to an account for our actions; and, as there is no exact distribution of rewards and punishments in this life, we are entitled to expect another, suited to the respective characters of men, and the moral

attributes of the Deity. If, after all, we consider actual opinions on this head, we shall find the wisest among the heathen were far from attaining any certainty. When they gave scope to their feelings and their hopes, they sometimes painted the elysian abodes of the virtuous in the warmest colouring of eloquence; in their cooler moments they subsided into scepticism; so that, on the whole, the idea of a future state seems to have operated not so much as a fixed principle, as a vague presentiment.

Revelation can alone boast of having "brought *life and immortality to light.*" The religion of *Jesus Christ places the reality* of a future state *at the foundation of its truths.* It is there so constantly reverted to, so often repeated, and so solemnly enforced, that it has never been by any class of christians disputed or denied. Nor is the reality only of a future state revealed in christianity: as far as is consistent with the present limitation of our faculties, it affords us the justest views of its nature; which it makes to consist not in sensual gratifications, or festive bowers—the visions of a Mahometan Paradise—but in enjoyments the most suited to the rational and immortal mind; a union with God, the knowledge of his perfections, and the eternal fruition of his love. The information which christianity imparts on these subjects is not conveyed in dark and symbolical expressions, or in a chain of philosophical reasoning; but in a manner the most perspicuous

and popular. With what majestic simplicity does our Lord assure us of the resurrection of the just!—"I am the resurrection and the life. He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live, and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die." "This is the will of him that sent me, that every one which believeth on the Son may have everlasting life, and I will raise him up at the last day." When many of the disciples of our Lord went back, and walked no more with him, being offended with the sublime mysteries of his doctrine, he took occasion to ask his twelve apostles—"Will ye also go away?" To which Peter, in the name of them all, made this reply—"Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life." In this short answer we behold the distinguished lustre of christianity. It explains at once the ground of a rational attachment to it, and will be sufficient to justify its profession from the reproach of folly, however mysterious its doctrines, however arduous its duties, and however painful or costly its sacrifices.

There are two purposes connected with the present solemnity to which the doctrine of immortality ought to be applied. The first regards the regulation of life; the second, the inspiring us with fortitude in the contemplation of our own deaths, and those of our relatives and friends. If we consider ourselves as candidates for an eternal state of happiness, it becomes us to regard life, with all its vicissitudes, as a probationary state,

and to look upon every thing, that is not directly or indirectly conducive to our eternal welfare, as foreign to our purpose, and undeserving our pursuit. Heavenly-mindedness is, in this view, as much the dictate of reason as of scripture. It is nothing more than the placing our affections where we expect our felicity; the wisdom of preferring the end to the means,—that which is permanent to that which is transitory. Let the men of the world, who disbelieve the declarations of the gospel respecting eternal realities, lead a life, if they please, of dissipation and vice: but for a professor of religion to confine his affections to the earth is equally impious and absurd. Distracted betwixt his inordinate attachment to the present, and his apprehension of a future world, his religion, if it will bear that name, must be a constant source of disquietude. He has neither the calmness of insensibility, nor the triumph of faith. His prevailing regard to the interests of the present life renders it impossible for him to set his affections on a better state; while the carnal and reluctant glances he is compelled to take of that state are sufficient to imbitter his enjoyments and disturb his repose.

The misery which persons of this description suffer from an inward conflict, between principle and practice, is the chief reason that has induced superficial observers to represent christianity as a gloomy, melancholy system. There is no other foundation for this charge, than that its claims are

grand and extensive; that it disdains a compromise with the corrupt attachments of the heart; and that they who will not allow it the dominion of their affections will find it the troubler of their thoughts.

Whoever lives under the habitual influence of those tempers which qualify us for heaven, derives from his view of the eternal world the purest serenity and delight. In the midst of the severest disappointments of human life, secret consolations spring up in his mind, which sometimes swell into rapture, disarm the world of its terrors, and afford him a foretaste of unutterable bliss. In vain will ye look elsewhere for true magnanimity and moral grandeur. It is religion alone which both animates and softens the heart, cherishes sensibility, instils fortitude, and enables us to triumph without extravagance, and to suffer without dejection.

If the scripture doctrine of immortality is entitled to so much weight in the regulation of LIFE, its influence is not less sovereign in dispelling the terrors of DEATH, and consoling us under the loss of our dearest friends and relatives. "I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not even as others who have no hope; for, if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him." "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and the trump of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we which are alive, and remain, shall

be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air; so shall we be ever with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words." And who can fail being penetrated with the divine consolation they afford? If ever christianity appears in its power, it is when it erects its trophies on the TOMB; when it takes up its votaries where the world leaves them, and fills the breast with immortal hopes in dying moments.

Nor are the words I have quoted adapted to support the mind of a christian in the view of his *own* dissolution only; they administer the firmest support amidst the breaches which death is continually making in the church of Christ. A degree of sorrow, on such occasions, nature compels us to feel, and religion does not condemn. At the decease of Lazarus, while his sisters were lamenting his loss, "Jesus wept." But the sorrow which a christian feels in such situations is mingled with hope. By the light of faith, he traces his deceased friends into an eternal world. Instead of considering them as lost or extinct, he beholds them still under the eye of Divine Providence. The period of their trial is closed: they have entered into rest, where, sheltered from the storms of life and the dangers of temptation, their happiness is for ever fixed and unalterable. Their separation is neither final nor complete. The pious living and the pious dead are still one family, under one head; and, when he "who is their life shall appear, they

shall appear with him in glory." The friendships which have had virtue and religion for their basis will survive all human ties, outlive the habitable globe, and form, in all probability, a principal part of the happiness of the blessed.

It is not unusual, I am aware, on occasions like these, to pass high encomiums on the character of the deceased; a mode of proceeding the less requisite, in the present instance, as the character of Mr. Crabb was too well established, and held in too high esteem, to have any thing to hope from praise, or to fear from censure. His mild and gentle spirit rendered it nearly impossible for him to have any enemies. The innocence and sanctity of his behaviour, the sensibility of his heart, the fidelity with which he discharged the duties of life, and the equanimity with which he bore its rebukes and sufferings, will leave a lasting impression on the minds of all his friends and acquaintance. You of this church and congregation have lost a friend, an instructor, a pastor; one who was anxious, on every occasion, to promote your spiritual and eternal welfare; who knew how to "rejoice with them that rejoice, and weep with them that weep." You, my friends, will long remember, I trust, the affectionate exhortations he addressed to you, and make it appear, on the day of solemn account, that he has "not laboured in vain, nor spent his strength for nought." His relation to you, as your pastor, has ceased; but its effects and consequences will never cease; they will reach into eternity, and

"become the savour of life unto life, or of death unto death." If the duties of the ministerial character appeared so weighty in the eyes of an apostle that he was ready to sink under it, and exclaimed, "Who is sufficient for these things?" you will recollect it was its connexion with the eternal interests of his hearers which rendered his situation so arduous, and his responsibility so awful.

You have now before you one more example of the uncertainty of life. Your deceased friend and pastor was cut off in the midst of his days. His sun, instead of performing the usual circuit, set in its meridian. He, no doubt, often endeavoured, during his continuance among you, to convince you of the vanity of the world, and the insufficiency of all its enjoyments to render you happy; but Providence determined he should do more; that he should instruct you from the tomb, on these topics, and bring them home to your senses.

Another year is passed away, and you have entered upon a new portion of time.* The division of time into distinct periods, besides its utility in business and in science, is favourable to moral reflection. On the entrance upon a new year, a contemplative mind will be naturally employed in estimating its acquisitions, comparing its improvements, retracing past occurrences, and revolving future prospects. The giddy and thoughtless feel their attention for a moment fixed, and, suspecting all is not right, form some indistinct resolution of

* This Oration was delivered on New Year's Day.

repentance and amendment, which they are determined to execute as soon as some present scheme shall be finished, some prevailing passion gratified, or some expected change in their situation shall take place. The present moment seems always attended with insuperable difficulties; but they still flatter themselves with the hope of some more auspicious period, when their minds will be disengaged, their passions composed, and religion assert its power. Thus, year rolls on after year, the self-delusion is repeated, and, while they are planning new schemes of life, they sink into the grave.

If a hardened contempt of religion has slain its thousands, a feeble and irresolute spirit has slain its ten thousands. Are there none in this assembly, who, it is to be feared, are convinced of the importance of religion, and are yet unwilling to pay an immediate attention to it, flattering themselves they shall have ample opportunities of satisfying all its demands?

Vain, presumptuous man! hast thou penetrated the councils of the Almighty, or been permitted to read thy destiny, that, whilst thou beholdest the ravages of death all around thee,—the multitudes which fall at thy right hand and at thy left, the young and the old, the feeble and the strong, hurried into eternity,—thou shouldst suppose thyself alone firm and immovable amidst this flux and succession of being! Wouldst thou wish to surmount the fear of death? Acquaint thyself with him who is the resurrection and the life; with that

Saviour, who is its author, its revealer, and its pattern. "Take his yoke upon you, and learn of him." Attend to his instructions, and yield yourself up to his guidance. You will then be able to converse familiarly with death. You will feel no terror in the prospect of future judgement, but will wait for its approach, and be able to stand before the Son of God at his coming. "Finally, let us who are of the light and of the day be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation." Instead of murmuring at such afflictive dispensations as separate us from those we esteem and love, let us employ them as inducements to set our affections on a better world, where we shall shortly join them; remembering, that whatever ties of affection are broken by death, are taken from the enjoyments of time to enrich the prospect of eternity.

SKETCH

OF THE

CHARACTER OF MRS. M. CARRYER.

[WRITTEN IN 1812.]

IT is not my intention to attempt a laboured eulogium on our departed sister, but justice compels me briefly to notice some of the distinguishing traits of her character. I regret that, partly owing to the natural reserve of the deceased, and partly owing to my own unsocial humour, my acquaintance with her was so limited. I knew enough of her, however, to convince me that she was a person of no ordinary worth; and, from the testimony of all who were favoured with her intimacy, I am fully persuaded, her piety was of the most solid kind, not evaporating in talk, nor obtruding itself in an ostentatious profession, but operating in a constant and exemplary discharge of every private and social duty. She was a pattern of diligence, as well in her attention to domestic engagements, as in the constancy with which she applied herself to the means of grace, in the closet and in the sanctuary. As a wife, a mother, and a member of a christian church, her behaviour was

such, that it is impossible to say which character she adorned most. Averse from every kind of display, her religion was of a retired nature; "planted by the rivers of water," and fed by a secret spring, "its leaf never withered, and it brought forth its fruit in its season." Her faith was such as purified the heart, and manifested itself in a series of wise and holy actions. Her hope was an "anchor of the soul, sure and stedfast, entering into that within the veil." In the former part of her experience, she was sometimes considerably agitated by doubts and fears; but, during the progress of the malady which terminated her dissolution, her painful apprehensions gradually subsided, and, although she sowed in tears, she reaped in joy. Her dying testimony to the excellence of religion, and to the power and grace of the Redeemer, was most affecting; and will, it is humbly hoped, leave a lasting impression on survivors. She often expressed her gratitude to Providence for directing her choice to a companion in life, from whose example, and from whose prayers, she derived important assistance in her walk with God; so that the change of situation, which to many females becomes a temptation and a snare, became to her a great means of spiritual improvement. The virtues which adorn a single state, she exhibited, not only unimpaired, but with increasing lustre, in her conjugal capacity. The essential benefit she derived from her obedience to the scriptural injunction to "marry in the Lord," conveys an impressive admonition to

the youth of both sexes. Let such as attach any importance to the cultivation of piety, and whose first solicitude it is to be prepared for eternity, avoid taking to their bosoms a domestic enemy, with whom it will be requisite to live in a state either of perpetual counteraction, or of sinful compliance; and from whom, without the interposition of divine grace, they must anticipate an eternal separation. Our dear departed sister made a wise choice, and determined to select, as a companion for life, one with whom she could indulge a confident hope of sharing a blessed eternity.

Her rapid advancement in every christian grace was manifest to every one except to herself: for she often expressed the deep sense she entertained of her manifest imperfections, while others beheld nothing in her but what was "pure, lovely, and of good report." As she was clothed with humility, so she was eminently soberminded, at the utmost distance from indulging in the levities, follies, and vain competitions of the age. She was chaste, a keeper at home, a lover of her husband, a lover of her children, and one who guided her house with discretion. Kindness to the indigent entered deeply into her character; she delighted "to do good to all men, especially to such as are of the household of faith." She was perfectly superior to the vanity of dress; her attire was suited to her station, neither mean nor splendid, but such as became a woman professing godliness. Her conviction of the nothingness of the world was

profound, and she longed, would her modesty have permitted, to admonish her young friends from her dying bed, to be on their guard against its fascinations and its snares. To her relations she often exclaimed, almost with her dying breath, "The world! the world!" intending to warn them of what she conceived to form their chief danger.

On the whole, among the numerous losses which this church has recently sustained, I know of none more entitled to lasting lamentation than the present; nor has there been a member removed, during the period of my ministry, whose life has been more exemplary, or whose memory will be more precious.

THE CHARACTER

OF THE LATE

REV. THOMAS ROBINSON,

VICAR OF ST. MARY'S, LEICESTER.

As exhibited in a Speech delivered at the Annual Meeting of the Leicester Auxiliary Bible Society, April 1813.

It is with a melancholy satisfaction I rise to express my entire approbation of the sentiments contained in the resolution just read.

It would, in my opinion, have been unnatural to usher our annual report into the world, without noticing that solemn and affecting dispensation which has deprived this society, this town, and this county, of its principal ornament. We are weakened this day by the falling of a pious and a great man in Israel. In the formation of this society our incomparable friend had a principal share; and through every stage he gave it an unremitted attention, and watched over its interests with a parental solicitude. The idea of instituting an auxiliary society in Leicester was no sooner suggested to him, than it engaged his most cordial good wishes: he lent to its support the vigour of his masculine understanding, the energies of his

capacious heart; and to him, beyond any other individual, it is indebted for the patronage and the maturity it has attained. He was, indeed, the father of this institution.—But of what institution formed for the promotion of the temporal and spiritual welfare of mankind in this place was he not the father? We can look nowhere, throughout this large and populous town, without perceiving the vestiges of his unwearied solicitude for the advancement of the happiness of his fellow-creatures. He has inscribed his history in the numerous charitable and religious foundations which owe their existence or their prosperity to his influence. Our jails, our hospitals, our schools, our churches, are replete with monuments of his worth, and with the effects of his energetic benevolence.

It is recorded of the great Hannibal, that, when an infant, his father conducted him to an altar, and made him vow eternal hostility to the Roman republic. Our venerable friend, when he first entered Leicester, appears, with an ardour not less intense, to have devoted himself to its interests. From the moment he entered the place, he appears to have relinquished all selfish pursuits, all idea of private gratification, and to have formed that system of conduct from which he never departed, which had the most immediate tendency to meliorate the state of its inhabitants. He became altogether a public character: he meditated, he wrote, he preached, he breathed, only for the public. Rarely, if ever, was there a mind more perfectly purified from

every tincture of selfishness or vanity. He made the most extensive sacrifices of his time and of his repose, with a spontaneity and alacrity which implied an almost total oblivion of his existence as an individual. Endowed with a capacity for high attainments in science, and distinguished at the university by the honours assigned to superior merit, he generously declined the pursuit of literary eminence for the sole purpose of doing good. It is but few who are capable of adequately appreciating the magnitude of such a sacrifice. Dr. Paley was, certainly, one of those few: and I had it from the lips of our venerable friend, that, in addicting himself to the duties of a parish priest, he had, in the opinion of that great man, chosen the better part; a choice which it is evident Heaven singularly sanctioned and approved. In fixing his system of life, he had unquestionably a view to a future account, and formed his determination on the assured persuasion of his appearing before the judgement-seat of Christ, where the salvation of one soul will cause a more glorious distinction than the greatest literary attainments; where all greatness of a merely intellectual nature will disappear, and nothing endure the scrutiny but active and disinterested virtue.

In the mean time, how narrow the bounds of his influence, how confined the ascendency of his character, had he been only the solitary student, instead of being the zealous and exemplary pastor, and the active citizen! On the former supposition,

he had inscribed his memorial in books; on the present, he inscribed it on hearts: and instead of his being an object of the admiration of the few, he was the man of the people.

In separate parts of his character, it were not impossible to find some who equalled, and others who excelled him; but in that rare combination of qualities which fitted him for such extensive usefulness, he stands unrivalled. As a pastor and public instructor, it may be possible to meet with some who have attained the same eminence; as a public man, he may have been equalled; but where shall we look in modern times for such an example of the union of the highest endowments as a pastor and preacher, with the qualifications adapted to the functions of civil life? It is this rare union which appears to me to give the character of our venerable friend its decided preeminence. It is not necessary to recall to your recollection the talents of Mr. Robinson as a public instructor; you have most, if not all of you, witnessed his pulpit exertions, on that spot where he was accustomed to retain a listening throng hanging upon his lips, awed, penetrated, delighted, and instructed, by his manly, unaffected eloquence. Who ever heard him, without feeling a persuasion that it was the man of God who addressed him; or without being struck with the perspicuity of his statements, the solidity of his thoughts, and the rich unction of his spirit? It was the harp of David, which, struck by his powerful hands, sent forth more than mortal

sounds, and produced an impression far more deep and permanent than the thunder of Demosthenes, or the splendid coruscations of Cicero.

The hearers of Mr. Robinson were too much occupied by the subjects he presented to their attention to waste a thought on the speaker; this occupied a second place in the order of their reflections: but when it did occur, it assumed the character, not of superficial admiration, but of profound attachment. Their feelings towards him were not those of persons gratified, but benefited; and they listened to his instructions, not as a source of amusement, but as a spring of living water. There never was a settled pastor, probably, who had formed a juster conception of the true end of preaching, who pursued it more steadily, or attained it to a greater extent. He preached immortal truth with a most extraordinary simplicity, perspicuity, and energy, in a style adapted to all capacities, equally removed from vulgarity and from affected refinement: and the tribute paid to his exertions consisted not in loud applauses: it was of a higher order; it consisted of penitential sighs, holy resolutions, of a determination of the whole soul for God, and such impressions on the spirits of men as will form the line of separation betwixt the happy and the miserable to all eternity.

In a word, by "the manifestation of the truth he commended himself to every man's conscience in the sight of God;" and the success which followed

was such as might be expected from such efforts. Through the protracted period of his labours, many thousands, who have finished their course with joy, derived from his ministry, there is reason to believe, the principle of a new life.

His residence in Leicester forms an epoch in the religious history of this county. From that time must be dated, and to his agency under Providence must be ascribed, a decided improvement in the moral and religious state of this town and its vicinity; an increase of religious light; together with the general diffusion of a taste and relish for the pure word of God. It is only once in an age that an individual is permitted to confer such benefits on the place of his residence, as this ancient and respectable borough derived from the labours of Mr. Robinson; and the change which Baxter accomplished at Kidderminster, *he* effected at Leicester. It was the boast of Augustus, that he found the city of Rome composed of brick, and left it marble. Mr. Robinson might say, without arrogance, that he had been the instrument of effecting a far more beneficial and momentous change. He came to this place while it was sunk in vice and irreligion; he left it eminently distinguished by sobriety of manners and the practice of warm, serious, and enlightened piety. He added not aqueducts and palaces, nor did he increase the splendour of its public edifices: but he embellished it with undecaying ornaments; he renovated the minds of the people, and turned a large portion

of them "from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God." He embellished it with living stones, and replenished it with numerous temples of the Holy Ghost. He extended its intercourse with heaven, and prepared a numerous class of its inhabitants for the enjoyment of celestial bliss. Of the number of those who will devoutly acknowledge him as their spiritual father at the day of final audit, that day only can determine. Nor was his usefulness confined to the permanent inhabitants of this place; it was extended to the asylum of the sick, and to the cell of the criminal: the former found in him a physician to the soul, and returned to their homes not only with recruited health, but with renovated minds; and the latter were, in many instances, by penitence and prayer, prepared for their awful destiny. Of him it may be said, to an extent seldom equalled by a mere mortal, "He went about doing good." "When the eye saw him, it gave witness of him; when the ear heard him, it blessed him; for he helped the poor and the fatherless, and delivered them that were ready to perish." In addition to his numerous avocations, he undertook the weekly instruction of an excellent and extensive school, which was formed in his own parish, under his auspices, to which he imparted the elements of religious knowledge with a tenderness and assiduity which will never be forgotten.

There was scarcely a charitable institution set on foot, or a scheme of benevolence devised, of

which he did not form the principal spring. He was truly the centre about which every thing of public utility revolved: while his wisdom guided, his spirit animated, and his character impressed itself on all useful undertakings.

Though he came to this place a stranger, without any of the means of acquiring adventitious distinction, it is not to be wondered at that a man endued with such moral and intellectual qualities should gradually acquire distinguished ascendency. Obstructions and difficulties, indeed, he encountered at the outset of his career; but they gradually gave way to the energy of his character, and at length formed a vantage-ground, on which he stood more preeminent. By slow degrees, by a continual series of virtuous exertions, and a patient and unremitted perseverance in well-doing, he acquired a degree of influence over all classes of society, which has been the lot of few individuals. Whatever was the subject of dispute, the eminence of Mr. Robinson's services was never called in question; and however discordant the sentiments and feelings of the public on other topics, they perfectly coalesced in the homage due to his worth. To the veneration in which he was so generally held, may be ascribed the principal part of that freedom from party animosities, of that concord and harmony, which have for a long period so happily distinguished this town. The deference due to his opinion on all occasions of difficulty, the unbought tribute of esteem and affection claimed

by his worth, we delighted to pay. We felt gratified on finding such a rock on which we could repose our confidence, such a great example of what is most dignified in human nature, on which we could fix our eyes. By a reflex act, the virtuous part of the community felt better pleased with themselves, in proportion as they became susceptible of love and admiration towards an object so fitted, on every principle of reason and religion, to command them.

Though I have had the honour of a personal acquaintance with Mr. Robinson for upwards of thirty years, it is comparatively but of late that I had an opportunity of contemplating him more nearly. While placed at a distance, I admired him as one of the remote luminaries which adorn the hemisphere; I certainly perceived him to be a star of the first magnitude: but no sooner was I stationed upon the spot, than I became sensible of the lustre of his beams, felt the force of his attraction, and recognised in him the sun and centre of the system. His merit was not of that kind which attracts most admiration at a distance. It was so genuine and solid, that it grew in estimation the more closely it was inspected. It is possible some men may have extended their influence to a wider circle, and moved in a more extended sphere. But where influence is diffused beyond a certain limit, it becomes attenuated in proportion to its diffusion; it operates with an energy less intense. Mr. Robinson completely filled as large a sphere

of personal agency as is, perhaps, possible to an individual. He left no part of it unoccupied, no interstices unsupplied, and spread himself through it with an energy in which there was nothing irregular, nothing defective, nothing redundant.

Our deceased friend was eminently distinguished by a steady uniformity of conduct. While he appeared to multiply himself by the extent and diversity of his exertions, the principles upon which they were conducted, the objects they were destined to promote, were invariably the same. He was not active at intervals, and at other times torpid and inert; he did not appear the public man at one time, and at another absorbed in selfish pursuits: his efforts to do good in season and out of season were constant, and his course knew no other variety than that of the shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day. His goodness, founded on principle and corroborated by habit, operated with the steadiness of a law of nature, the beneficial results of which can never be sufficiently appreciated till they are suspended. They who contemplated Mr. Robinson at the distance of forty years, viewed him with the same emotions which he excited at a more advanced age, moderated, however, and chastised, by the apprehension, that it was possible some unexpected temptation might occur to divert him from his career. We have seen it completed, we have witnessed his perseverance and his conquest, and have seen his

virtues and his fame placed under the safeguard and seal of death and immortality.

Though he had reached that period of life which constitutes old age, it was a *cruda viridisque senectus.* His age had impaired little or nothing of his vigour: its chief effect was that of imparting additional dignity to his countenance, and weight to his character. He fell like a noble tree, after two or three strokes, with all his sap and verdure, with extended boughs and rich foliage, while thousands were reposing under his shadow and partaking of his fruits. Seldom has death gained a richer spoil than in the extinction of the earthly existence of this admirable man.

Having expatiated so largely on the eminent benefits accruing to mankind from the services of our departed friend, let me request your attention for a few moments longer, while I endeavour to portray more distinctly the leading features of his character. The predominant property of his mind, intellectually considered, appeared to me to be a strong and masculine understanding, copious in its resources, versatile in its operations, and eminently prompt in its decisions. He saw with a rapid glance the different bearings of a subject, and the proper measures to be adopted in the most intricate concerns. He possessed good sense in an exquisite degree, rarely, if ever, misled by the illusions of imagination, either in himself or others. To this was united a warmth and vivacity of

temperament, which made business his delight, action his element; accompanied with a resolution in his pursuits, not to be relaxed by fatigue, nor damped by discouragements, nor retarded by difficulties. To resolve and to execute, or at least to make a vigorous attempt, were with him the same thing. He joined in an eminent degree the *fortiter in re* with the *suaviter in modo;* none more inflexible in his purposes, none more conciliating in his manners. Without losing a particle of his dignity, without meanness, artifice, or flattery, he knew how to adapt himself to all sorts of society, and was equally acceptable in the character of the saint, the sage, and the cheerful engaging companion. By his amenity of manners and benignity of mind, he smoothed the asperity of contradiction, and left to the machine of public business the least possible friction.

It is almost unnecessary to state, that he laid the foundation of public confidence in his integrity, which was such that it was not only never sacrificed, but, as far as my information extends, never suspected. They who might differ from him the most on some subjects, of a religious or political nature, never called in question the honesty of his intentions. To this he joined, as a necessary instrument of success in active life, an uncommon share of prudence: by which I mean not that timid policy which creeps along the shore, without venturing to commit itself to the ocean; which shuns danger, without aspiring to conquest;

his prudence was of a more generous and enlarged sort,—the result not so much of calculation at the moment, as of well-regulated passions and established principles. He loved mankind too well to betray, or to speak evil of any. Vanity never made him loquacious, nor pride capricious. Having purified his mind, under the influence of religion, from vanity, pride, and resentment, the chief temptations to imprudence were precluded. His ardent mind left him no leisure for trifling, nor the great object he so steadily pursued, the least disposition to mingle with the details of scandal, or the privacies of domestic life.

The foundation of all these virtues was laid in christian piety. It was this which formed the basis of his character, and directed and regulated his pursuits. His piety was warm, manly, enlightened; at an equal distance from the moroseness of bigotry, the weakness of superstition, and the intemperate sallies of enthusiasm. His character is a practical illustration of the efficacy of the Bible, of which he was a humble and diligent student, whence he deduced his principles, and formed his maxims. Religion with him was not an occasional feeling, but an habitual element; not a sudden or transient impulse, but a permanent principle, a second nature, producing purity of intention, elevation of mind, and an uninterrupted series of useful exertions. Had he been spared to attend this anniversary, he would undoubtedly have delighted us by an impressive exhibition of

the excellences of revealed truth. Providence has adopted another mode of instruction: and now invites us to learn from his life, and from his death, the lessons we are no longer permitted to hear from his lips. He, being dead, yet speaketh;—he speaks in his writings, he speaks from his tomb, and points to that volume which it is the object of this assembly to circulate, as the source of all his virtues, and of all his greatness. After exhibiting, for our imitation, the lives of the holy men recorded in scripture,—men of whom the world was not worthy,—it has pleased God to present to our attention his own, formed on the same model, and replete with the same spirit. The reader of the "Scripture Characters" will be powerfully impelled to copy their example, by the reflection that there are few of their excellences which their Biographer did not attain; that they were shewn in his life with no less advantage than in his writings; and that, in his most popular work, he did nothing more than inculcate by his pen, what he was incessantly enforcing by his practice.

The loss which the church of Christ has sustained by the extinction of such a luminary is great; the loss to this populous town and neighbourhood irreparable. Ages may revolve ere a similar calamity occurs. The shepherd is torn from his flock; the spiritual father from his children; the sage counsellor, the patron of the poor and the destitute, and the great example of the power of religion, whose very countenance could not be

beheld without tender veneration, is no more. The name of Robinson will long combine with the mention of this place a train of solemn emotions, and the stranger will indulge a pious curiosity in inspecting the spot where he dwelt, and the church where he exercised his ministry.

We knew the precarious tenure by which we possessed him, in common with all other blessings; we knew he was mortal; but, notwithstanding we received repeated warnings by a succession of attacks, few had sufficient fortitude steadily to realize the approaching event. When the intelligence was circulated through the town—"Mr. Robinson is dead!" "Mr. Robinson is dead!" it was a thunderclap: it produced a sensation of dismay and astonishment, as though we scarcely believed to be possible, what we knew to be certain; and such an air of desolation and sorrow was impressed upon the countenance of the inhabitants, that a *stranger* must have perceived they had sustained no ordinary calamity. It was such as no event could have produced, but the removal of a saint and a prophet. Whoever wishes to learn how much piety dignifies a character, how much sainted worth, in its power over the heart, preponderates over every other species of eminence, let him turn to this scene, and compare the tears of a populous neighbourhood with the unmeaning decorations of funereal grandeur. None *spoke* of his virtues, none was *eloquent* in his praise; every heart was *oppressed* with a sense of its loss.

I cannot close this address without remarking that the possession of such a man as Mr. Robinson incurs a proportionable weight of responsibility; and that the time is approaching when it will be inquired what improvement we have derived from the exercise of such talents, and the exhibition of such an example.

It is incumbent on his hearers especially to reflect, that he who watched for souls is gone to give an account, not only of the principles on which *he* conducted, but of the reception *they* gave to his embassy, and, that against the impenitent and unbelieving, he is compelled to be "a swift witness before God." His warning voice, his pathetic appeals and expostulations, will be heard no more, but his record is on high, and the ministry he so long exercised amongst us, will infallibly be a savour of life unto life, or of death unto death. His life was not so properly employed, as consumed, in the incessant labour to bring sinners to repentance; and awful will be the doom of those who persist in rejecting the overtures of mercy, the word of reconciliation, dispensed with such admirable zeal, ability, and address.

To the pastoral cares, studies, and instructions, of this most eminent servant of God, death has put a final termination; but the enjoyment of such a ministry, and even the opportunity of witnessing such an example, will form a conspicuous feature in our probation, and be replete with consequences which stretch into eternity.

Permit me to indulge one more reflection: the life and ministry of this great man of God affords a demonstration of the futility of the clamour which is raised against the doctrine of salvation by grace through faith; as though it tended to relax the obligations to virtue, and to annul the commands of God. Who ever insisted on this doctrine more constantly, or urged its importance more earnestly, than he? and where, amongst its opponents, shall we discover indications of similar usefulness? Through a period of more than forty years, he employed himself in beating down the arrogance of a self-justifying spirit, in evincing the impossibility of being accepted on the footing of our own works, and in directing men of every description to seek for pardon in the blood of the cross. If there were any one topic on which he delighted to dwell more than others, this was unquestionably the topic.

To his manly and unsophisticated understanding, it was evident to a demonstration, that repentance must be grafted on humility; and that there was no room to apprehend his hearers would be tempted to contemn the authority, in consequence of being abased before the majesty, of God. He was also perfectly convinced that the blood of Christ, sprinkled by faith, was the only effectual balm for afflicted consciences. On these principles he conducted his ministry for near half a century, and we may challenge his enemies, (if there be any remaining,) to deny that its fruits were most

salutary. If the apostolic doctrine, which affirms that we are justified by faith without the deeds of the law, possess the tendency to licentiousness which its opponents ascribe to it, that tendency could not have failed to operate under a course of instruction so long continued, and of which the tenet in question formed so distinguishing a feature. "By their fruits ye shall know them: men do not gather grapes of thorns, nor figs of thistles."

To conclude: the fittest improvement we can make of the melancholy event we are now deploring, will be a serious attention to the exhortation of St. Paul, addressed to primitive christians on the loss of eminent pastors:—"Remember them which have had the rule over you; and, considering the end of their conversation, imitate their faith."

FRAGMENT.

CHARACTER OF THE REV. JOHN SUTCLIFF.

[Written in 1814. Not published before.]

A sweet humility formed a very distinguishing feature in his character. Who ever witnessed, in our deceased brother, those airs of arrogance, or that fondness for display, which are frequently found in persons of very inferior talents and acquirements to those which he possessed? In truth, his aversion to ostentation might alone be said to be carried to excess, since it prevented him, in his public ministry, from availing himself of [those] ample stores of knowledge by which he could often have delighted and instructed his hearers. He had far more learning than the mere hearer of his discourses would have conjectured; for he seemed almost as anxious to conceal as some are to display.

Nor was it in this particular alone that his humility was apparent. It diffused itself over the whole of his character and deportment, and gave it a certain beauty which [no] artifice could successfully imitate. His humility was not displayed in depreciating his performances, nor in speaking

of himself in degrading terms: it appeared rather in forgetting himself, and in a natural readiness to give others the superiority. It accompanied him so incessantly, that he might truly be said to "be clothed with humility."

As his disposition little inclined him to ecstasy and rapture, so his piety shone with a mild and steady lustre, perfectly free from the false fire of enthusiasm, and equally from a lukewarm formality. There were few men in whom it appeared more natural, or more manifestly as a principle interwoven with the inmost texture of his mind. His great modesty seldom permitted him to advert to his own experience, either in public discourse, or in more private conversation; but a savour of experimental piety pervaded his whole character.

The mild and placid cheerfulness which marked his countenance and deportment, would lead us to suppose that he habitually walked in the divine light; and the evidences of his interest in the divine favour were rarely, if ever, impaired or eclipsed. He was one of the few men whose cheerfulness appeared to be increased by age; verifying, in this particular, the description given of "the path of the just, which is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day." His life was truly exemplary, being filled up with an uninterrupted series of useful, benevolent, and pious actions, proceeding from their true principles, and distinguished by an eminent decorum of time and place. He was a pattern to

believers, "in faith, in purity, and in conversation." Though rather the opposite to loquacious, he had a high relish for the pleasures of christian society, in which it is difficult to say whether he imparted or received most pleasure. "The law of kindness was on his tongue;" and so attentive was he on every occasion to the feelings of those with whom he conversed, that his company was both inoffensive and delightful.

Through a long series of years his attendance at the association, and at ministers' meetings, was so constant and punctual, that his occasional absence was severely felt; and that meeting seemed essentially defective, which was not graced with his presence. His appearance amongst us was hailed as a certain presage of harmony and love. Multitudes can witness the deep and pungent regret experienced at the last annual association, at the melancholy tidings of that fatal illness which prevented his attendance.

Few men took a deeper interest than our deceased brother in the general state of the church, and the propagation of the gospel abroad. The future glory of the kingdom of Christ, and the best means of promoting it, were his favourite topics, and usurped a large part of his thoughts and his prayers; nor was he ever more in his element, than when he was exerting his powers in devising plans for its extension. The baptist mission in India is under incalculable obligations to his sagacity and prudence.

MEMOIR

OF

THE REV. THOMAS TOLLER.

[WRITTEN IN 1821.]

THE subject of the following Memoir was born at South Petherton, a populous village in Somersetshire, A. D. 1756. His parents were John and Mary Toller, whose maiden name was Northcote. His father was an attorney of eminence, two of whose sons were educated for that profession. Of the early years of Thomas, the subject of the following narrative, I have little information, farther than that both his parents were eminently pious, and that he always considered himself indebted, under God, for his first religious impressions, to the tender solicitude of his mother for the promotion of his eternal welfare. Whether those impressions issued at that period in genuine conversion is not known: nor are we possessed of any authentic information of the circumstances connected with that event. The extreme diffidence and modesty which distinguished Mr. Toller, probably prevented his relating to his nearest friends the early exercises of his mind on religious subjects: the consequence is, that in this instance, as in many others, we are left

to infer the reality of the change from its effects. The light and insinuations of the Divine Spirit so often accompany the conduct of a strictly religious education, that some of the most eminent Christians have acknowledged themselves at a loss to assign the precise era of their conversion; but whether this was the case with our excellent friend, it is impossible to say.

At the early age of fifteen, his parents sent him to the academy at Daventry in Northamptonshire, over which Dr. Ashworth, the worthy successor of the celebrated Dr. Doddridge, presided: his assistant in the academy was the Rev. Mr. Robins, who afterwards occupied the same station with distinguished ability. Of both his tutors he was wont to speak in terms of high respect: of Mr. Robins, he was often heard to say, that he considered him as the wisest and the best man he ever knew. Among many other mental endowments, he was remarkable for delicacy of taste and elegance of diction; and, perhaps, my reader will excuse my observing, that the first perception of these qualities which the writer of these lines remembers to have possessed, arose from hearing him preach at Northampton on a public occasion. It is to be lamented that he has left none of those productions behind him, which a correct and beautiful imagination, embodied in language of the most classic purity, rendered so impressive and delightful. The qualities of his heart corresponded to those of his genius; and though, long before his death, his bodily infirmities

obliged him to relinquish a commanding station and retire into obscurity, he retained to the last such an ascendency over the minds of his former pupils, and such an interest in their affections, as nothing but worth of the highest order can command.

To return from this digression. At the time of Mr. Toller's admission into the Daventry academy, the literary reputation of that seminary was higher than that of any among the dissenters; but, partly owing to a laxness in the terms of admission, and partly to the admixture of lay and divinity students, combined with the mode in which theology was taught, erroneous principles prevailed much; and the majority of such as were educated there became more distinguished for their learning, than for the fervour of their piety, or the purity of their doctrine. The celebrated Priestley speaks of the state of the academy, while he resided there, with great complacency: nothing, he assures us, could be more favourable to the progress of free inquiry; since both the tutors and students were about equally divided between the orthodox and arian systems. The arguments by which every possible modification of error is attempted to be supported, were carefully marshalled in hostile array against the principles generally embraced; while the Theological Professor prided himself on the steady impartiality with which he held the balance betwixt the contending systems, seldom or never interposing his own opinion, and still less betraying

the slightest emotion of antipathy to error, or predilection to truth. Thus a spirit of indifference to all religious principles was generated in the first instance, which naturally paved the way for the prompt reception of doctrines indulgent to the corruption, and flattering to the pride, of a depraved and fallen nature.

To affirm that Mr. Toller derived no injury, from being exposed at so tender an age to this vortex of unsanctified speculation and debate, would be affirming too much, since it probably gave rise to a certain general manner of stating the peculiar doctrines of the gospel which attached chiefly to the earlier part of his ministry; though it is equally certain that his mind, even when he left the academy, was so far imbued with the grand peculiarities of the gospel, that he never allowed himself to lose sight of the doctrine of the cross, as the only basis of human hope.

Of the conduct of his academical studies, nothing memorable is recorded. From a very accomplished man, who I believe was his fellow-student, I have merely heard that he had no relish for the mathematics; a circumstance which has been often recorded in the biography of men of indisputable intellectual preeminence.

After a residence at Daventry of four years, he was appointed to supply a destitute congregation at Kettering, where he preached for the first time, October 1, 1775; and his services proved so acceptable, that, after repeated visits, he was invited

to take up his permanent residence with them, with which he complied in June of the ensuing year, and was ordained pastor, May 28, 1778. On his first coming to Kettering, the church was in a divided and unsettled state. His immediate predecessor was a gentleman of the name of Fuller, who, at the end of two years, in consequence of much dissension in the church, resigned the pastoral charge. Mr. Fuller was preceded by the Rev. Mr. Boyce, who sustained the pastoral office for a long series of years with the highest reputation and success, and whose death was deplored as an irreparable calamity, leaving it very improbable that a successor could be speedily found, capable of uniting the suffrages of a people whose confidence and esteem he had so long exclusively enjoyed. Such is the imperfection of the present state, that the possession of a more than ordinary portion of felicity is the usual forerunner of a correspondent degree of privation and distress; and the removal of a pastor who has long been the object of veneration generally places a church in a critical situation, exposed to feuds and dissensions, arising out of the necessity of a new choice. That of Mr. Toller, notwithstanding his extreme youth, was nearly unanimous. When he first supplied the congregation, nothing was more remote from his expectation than being invited to a permanent residence: his highest ambition was to be tolerated as a transient supply; and when, to his no small surprise, they made choice of him as their stated

minister, he entered on that office with that heart-felt conviction of its importance, and unfeigned distrust of his own sufficiency, which are the surest omen of success. He commenced his career with fear and trembling; and, instead of being elated by the preference shewn him by a large and respectable society, he was ready to sink under the weight of his responsibility.

Few men probably have been more indebted for the formation of their character to the fervent piety of their audience. Such was the state of his mind, at that period, that, had he been connected with a people of an opposite character, his subsequent history would have exhibited, in all probability, features very dissimilar from those which eventually belonged to it. If, in a lengthened ministerial course, the people are usually formed by their pastor, in the first stage it is the reverse; it is the people who form the minister. Mr. Toller often expressed his gratitude for that merciful providence which united him at so early a period with a people adapted to invigorate his piety, and confirm his attachment to the vital, fundamental truths of christianity. The reciprocal influence of a minister and a congregation on each other is so incessant, and so powerful, that I would earnestly dissuade an inexperienced youth from connecting himself with a people whose doctrine is erroneous, or whose piety is doubtful, lest he should be tempted to consult his ease by choosing to yield to a current he would find it difficult to resist. To

root up error, and reclaim a people from inveterate habits of vice and irreligion, is unquestionably a splendid achievement; but it requires a hardihood of character and decision of principle not often found in young persons.

Little variety must be looked for in the subsequent sketch of Mr. Toller's life. As he travelled little, and seldom mingled in the scenes of public business,—as his habits were domestic and his disposition retired,—years glided away, without presenting an occurrence of sufficient magnitude to entitle it to a permanent record. Through a long series of years, he persevered in the exemplary discharge of his spiritual functions, among a people who, in proportion as his talents unfolded themselves, regarded him with increasing love and veneration, as well on account of his ministerial qualifications, as his amiable, prudent, and consistent deportment. He was the centre of union to a large and an extensive circle of ministers and of people, who, however they might differ in other particulars, unanimously concurred in their admiration of his talents, and their esteem of his virtues. He was surrounded by friends who vied with each other in demonstrations of respect, and by an audience who looked forward to each succeeding sabbath as to a mental feast, and who hung upon his lips with an attention which might have tempted a stranger to suppose they were hearing him for the first time or the last. From the commencement of his residence at Kettering, the attachment

of his people went on still increasing, till it arrived at a point beyond which it would have been idolatry. This extraordinary attachment must be ascribed partly to the impression produced by his public services, and partly to the gentleness and amenity of his private manners. It may be possible to find other preachers equally impressive, and other men equally amiable; but such a combination of the qualities calculated to give the ascendant to a public speaker, with those which inspire the tenderness of private friendship, is of rare occurrence.

The leisure which the retired and tranquil tenour of his life secured, he employed in the perusal of the best authors in our language, which, by continually adding to his mental stores, imparted to his ministry an ample and endless variety. Although he almost invariably preached from notes composed in short-hand, his immediate preparations for the pulpit, there is reason to believe, were neither long nor laborious. His discourses were not the painful productions of a barren mind, straining itself to meet the exigencies of the moment; but, gathered from a rich and cultivated soil, they were a mere scantling of the abundance which was left behind. He considered every new accession to the stock of his ideas, every effort of reflection, as a preparation for the pulpit; and looked upon those who are necessitated to afford a portion of periodical instruction every week, without having accumulated mental stores, as in

much the same situation with the Israelites who were doomed to produce their tale of bricks without straw. Preachers of this description may, indeed, amass a heap of glittering and misplaced ornaments, or "beat the air" with the flourishes of a tumid, unmeaning rhetoric; but the deficiency of real matter, of solid information, cannot fail, eventually, to consign them to contempt. Whether Mr. Toller was ever a severe student, or ever was engaged in a regular and systematic pursuit of the different branches of literature or of science, I cannot ascertain; but that he was much devoted to reading is matter of notoriety. By the incessant accumulation of fresh materials, he became "a scribe well instructed in the mysteries of the kingdom of God," and, "like a wise householder," was enabled "to bring out of his treasure things new and old." The settlement of Mr. Fuller, the venerable secretary of the Baptist Mission, in the same place, by giving scope to a virtuous emulation, was probably equally beneficial to both parties. From the absence of competition, and the abundance of leisure attending a country retirement, the mental faculties are in danger of slumbering; the rust of sloth too often blunts their edge, and impairs their brightness; which nothing could be more fitted to counteract, than the presence of such a man as Mr. Fuller, distinguished for constitutional ardour and industry.

In the year 1793, he entered into the married state with Miss Elizabeth Gale, the eldest daughter

of Mr. William Gale, who then resided at Cranford, in the neighbourhood of Kettering. By this lady he had two children; John, who died in his infancy, and Thomas, who still survives him, and, under the most pleasing auspices, succeeds his father in the pastoral office. During the short period of this union, he appears to have enjoyed the highest degree of connubial felicity; but, not long after the birth of her second child, Mrs. Toller betrayed symptoms of consumption, and, after languishing a considerable time under the attack of that incurable malady, through the whole of which her ardent attachment to her husband, and profound submission to the will of God, were most conspicuous, she expired on the 15th of September, 1796.

It was about this period of his life that my acquaintance with him commenced. I had known him previously, and occasionally heard him; but it was at a season when I was not qualified to form a correct estimate of his talents. At the time referred to, we were engaged to preach a double lecture at Thrapstone, nine miles from Kettering; and never shall I forget the pleasure and surprise with which I listened to an expository discourse from 1 Peter ii. 1—3. The richness, the unction, the simple majesty, which pervaded his address, produced a sensation which I never felt before: it gave me a new view of the christian ministry. But the effect, powerful as it was, was not to be compared with that which I experienced a few

days after, on hearing him at the half-yearly association at Bedford. The text which he selected was peculiarly solemn and impressive: his discourse was founded on 2 Peter i. 12—15: "Yea, I think it meet as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up, by putting you in remembrance: knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle; even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath shewed me," &c. The effect of this discourse on the audience was such as I have never witnessed before or since. It was undoubtedly very much aided by the peculiar circumstances of the speaker, who was judged to be far advanced in a decline, and who seemed to speak under a strong impression of its being the last time he should address his brethren on such an occasion. The aspect of the preacher, pale, emaciated, standing apparently on the verge of eternity, the simplicity and majesty of his sentiments, the sepulchral solemnity of a voice which seemed to issue from the shades, combined with the intrinsic dignity of the subject, perfectly quelled the audience with tenderness and terror, and produced such a scene of audible weeping as was perhaps never surpassed. All other emotions were absorbed in devotional feeling: it seemed to us as though we were permitted for a short space to look into eternity, and every sublunary object vanished before "the powers of the world to come." Yet there was no considerable exertion, no vehemence displayed by the speaker, no splendid imagery, no magnificent description: it was the

simple domination of truth, of truth indeed of infinite moment, borne in upon the heart by a mind intensely alive to its reality and grandeur. Criticism was disarmed; the hearer felt himself elevated to a region which it could not penetrate; all was powerless submission to the master-spirit of the scene. It will be always considered, by those who witnessed it, as affording as high a specimen as can be easily conceived of the power of a preacher over his audience, the habitual, or even frequent recurrence of which, would create an epoch in the religious history of the world.

During this interview, he was invited by the writer of these lines to pay a visit to his friends at Cambridge: with that invitation he shortly after complied. His health had long been much impaired, and serious apprehensions had been entertained, by others as well as by himself, of his being far advanced in a decline. By his excursion to Cambridge, however, in the course of which he met with the most flattering attentions from all quarters, his spirits were revived, his health improved, and from that time the symptoms of disease gradually subsided. During his visit, he afforded the people at Cambridge and its vicinity several opportunities of hearing him; and on no occasion was he heard without admiration and delight: for, though no single discourse was equally impressive with that which was delivered at Bedford, he sustained, to the full, the high reputation

he had acquired; nor will the numerous and respectable congregations he addressed ever cease to consider this as one of the most favoured seasons of their lives. From that time his celebrity as a preacher was diffused through a much wider circle than before: he began universally to be esteemed one of the most distinguished ministers of the age; a character which he maintained with undiminished lustre to the end of his life.

He continued a widower till the year 1803, when he took for his second wife Elizabeth, the eldest daughter of Mr. William Wilkinson of Northampton, by whom he had five children, Richard, William, Joseph, Henry, and George, all of whom, together with their mother, survive him. To what degree this union contributed to the happiness of the latter stages of his life, the delicacy due to a most amiable woman, whose humility renders her as averse to receive praises as she is careful to deserve them, forbids me to say. Suffice it to observe that, notwithstanding the disparity of years, there never was a connexion which more completely realized the highest anticipations of the friends of both parties.

In the year 1799, the congregation assembling in Carter-lane, London, under the pastoral care of the excellent Mr. Taylor, wanting a supply for one part of the day, applied to Mr. Toller, and offered him, for one service only, a salary considerably beyond what he then enjoyed. To this invitation he gave a decided negative. In the beginning of

the following year, the congregation at Clapham gave him a similar invitation, which he also declined. The two congregations then united their invitations, offering a large salary on condition of his undertaking a single service at each place. This joint application he refused. The people of Kettering, hearing of these repeated attempts to remove him, became justly alarmed: a few of them waited upon him, informing him of the uneasiness they felt at the repeated attempts which had been made, and were still making, to effect a separation. They assured him of his entire possession of the hearts of his people, and that, though their situation did not permit their making such proposals as the other parties, they would do all in their power, and most gladly rectify any circumstances which gave him uneasiness. His reply was, that, if he found his services still acceptable, no pecuniary advantages should ever tempt him to relinquish his charge. At the same time he intimated that, as the two congregations still persisted in their application, he wished his people publicly to express their sentiments on the subject, that he might be armed with conclusive reasons for declining invitations so earnestly and repeatedly urged. This gave occasion to three separate addresses, from the young people, from the members of the Benevolent Society, and from the congregation at large, each expressive of the high esteem they entertained for his character, their sense of the benefit derived from his ministry, and their extreme reluctance to

resign advantages which they so highly prized. To these addresses a most affectionate and appropriate reply was made by their pastor, in which he assured them of his unalterable attachment, together with his final determination to accede to their wishes; and thus ended the last attempt to remove Mr. Toller from his station.

The reader will naturally be surprised to find that on this occasion no address was presented by the church. As this omission cannot with a shadow of probability be ascribed to indifference on their part, it must be imputed to the church not occupying that rank in the esteem of the auditory to which it is justly entitled. In every christian congregation, the church ought to be regarded as the principal object, to which the auditory are but an appendage, and for a union with which it should be their highest ambition to become qualified. Congregations are the creatures of circumstances; churches the institution of God: and, if we adhere to the maxims and examples of scripture, and of primitive antiquity, in all religious proceedings their judgement will first be consulted, and their official character recognised. But here we meet with a transaction of great moment, in which three classes of persons, to which no function is assigned in the New Testament, act a conspicuous part, while the church is wholly overlooked. My reason for animadverting on this procedure is, that, in the economy of modern dissenters, a growing tendency may be perceived to merge the church in the

congregation, and to commit the management of the most weighty matters to a body of subscribers in preference to the members; an innovation, should it generally prevail, productive of incalculable evils. Many of those who compose the auditors, in distinction from the church, may possess genuine piety; but, while they persist in declining to make a public profession of Christ, it is scarcely possible for them to give proof of it: the greater part, it is no breach of candour to suppose, are men of the world; and, surely, it requires little penetration to perceive the danger which religion must sustain, by transferring the management of its concerns from persons decidedly religious to those whose pretensions to interfere are founded solely on pecuniary considerations. The presumptuous intermeddling of worldly, unsanctified spirits, with ecclesiastical concerns, has been the source of almost every error in doctrine, and enormity in practice, that has deformed the profession of christianity from the time of Constantine to the present day; nor is dissent of much importance, except as far as it affords an antidote to this evil. The system which confounds the distinction between the church and the congregation has long since been carried to perfection in the Presbyterian denomination; and we all know what preceded, and what has followed that innovation,—the decay of piety, the destruction of discipline, a most melancholy departure, in a word, both in principle and in practice, from genuine christianity.

No event contributed more to make Mr. Toller extensively known beyond the limits of the dissenting connexion, than the active part which he took in promoting the objects of the Bible Society. Strongly impressed with the truth of our Lord's declaration, that "the kingdom of God cometh not with observation," and constitutionally averse to every thing noisy and ostentatious, it was rarely that he could be prevailed upon to engage in those popular religious societies, the existence of which may be said to constitute an era in the history of religion. Of societies even formed for the propagation of christianity in foreign parts, he was more disposed to admire the zeal that animated the exertions, than to anticipate the success, having formed an opinion that the final triumph of the gospel over paganism was destined to be effected by the renewal of those miraculous gifts which attended its first promulgation.

But the Bible Society, by the simplicity of its object, and the comprehensive catholicism of its constitution, so consonant to the unbounded liberality of his views, commanded his unqualified approbation; and having been chosen one of the secretaries for the Northern Auxiliary Branch, in the county of Northampton, from its first formation, he directed the entire force of his mind to it; attending regularly, as long as his health would permit, the various meetings held in the vicinity. The sensation produced by his speech at the first meeting at Northampton where his grace the

Duke of Grafton presided, will never be forgotten. Departing from the usual practice on such occasions, he addressed a considerable part of it to the noble chairman, contrasting his then situation with that which he occupied in the House of Lords; a task which, difficult as it was, he performed with a dignity, pathos, and decorum, that astonished and delighted the audience. Its effect on the duke himself was to draw tears from his eyes, and induce him to double his original donation. In strokes of sudden pathos, and unpolished grandeur, Mr. Toller was almost unequalled; and, as his whole soul was engaged in promoting the Bible Society, on no occasion were his peculiar powers displayed to more advantage.

It has been already remarked, that missionary efforts excited, at their commencement, but little of his attention; not because he was indifferent to their object, but from a settled conviction that the conversion of the heathen was not to be effected by ordinary means, but by miraculous interposition. Whether he entirely relinquished that expectation I am not prepared to say; it is certain his views underwent some modification upon that subject. The astonishing progress of the Bible Society in circulating the Scriptures throughout the world,—the unparalleled exertions of Dr. Carey, and of others, in translating them into the principal languages of the East, and the success of the London Missionary Society in Africa and the South Sea, where whole tribes and nations have been led, by a simultaneous impulse, to abandon their idols,

and to worship the one living and true God, opened a new prospect, and convinced him that the general emancipation of the pagan world from the power of darkness, might be accomplished without that supernatural agency which he formerly deemed indispensable. A pertinacious adherence to one mode of thinking, in spite of superior evidence, was no part of his character; and, though not very apt to change his opinion on subjects on which he had long exercised his mind, his firmness was untinctured with obstinacy.

During the greater portion of his life, he was occasionally liable to great depression of spirits; but, about seven years previous to its close, in consequence of a sudden interruption of the profuse perspiration which had constantly attended his public exercises, and which was thrown back upon the system, he sunk into such a state of despondency as disqualified him, for some time, for the discharge of his ministerial functions. His mind, during this season, was harassed with the most distressing apprehensions of a future state, and possessed with such a view of his pollution, in the sight of a holy God, that he was tempted to suppose all his past experience in religion was delusive. Of his state of mind during this melancholy period, I know not whether he has left any written account; but I recollect, when adverting to it in familiar conversation, he described it as a year of almost incessant weeping and prayer. Though none who were acquainted with him will

entertain a doubt of the sincerity of his piety previous to that afflictive visitation, as little can it be doubted that it was a source of great spiritual improvement, that he "did business in the mighty waters," and that he was brought to a more profound knowledge of himself, and a more deep and humble reliance on the power and grace of the Redeemer, than he had before experienced. From that time his discourses were more thoroughly imbued with the peculiarities of the gospel, his doctrinal views more clear and precise, and his whole conversation and deportment such as announced a rapid advance in spirituality. That generality in his statements of revealed truth, which was the consequence of his education at Daventry, and which almost invariably characterized the pupils of that seminary, totally disappeared, and he attained "to all the riches of the full assurance of the mystery of God the Father and of Christ." Though he survived that affliction several years, it probably shortened his life, by giving that concussion to his nervous system from which he never perfectly recovered; and from that time the circulation of his blood appears to have been less regular, and the depression of his spirits more frequent than before.

In the year 1813, the friends of Mr. Toller determined to carry into effect an idea which had before been suggested, that of raising a sum of money to be presented as a testimony of their esteem, as well as with a view to lay the basis of a permanent provision for his family. As soon as he

had intelligence of the design, he, in a letter to a gentleman who had taken an active part in the affair, communicated very freely his sentiments on the occasion, in which, without positively declining it, he suggested some objections to the measure, intimating his fear that, by occasioning a diversity of sentiment on its propriety, it might destroy that harmony and cordiality of feeling which had so long prevailed in his connexions. It breathes such a spirit of tenderness, humility, and modesty, that I cannot doubt the reader will be gratified by its insertion.* It is almost unnecessary to add, that the apprehensions and scruples which arose from his extreme delicacy were overruled, and a sum amounting to nearly a thousand pounds was contributed, with a promptitude and alacrity which did equal honour to those who conferred and to him who received the favour. When it is recollected that he had repeatedly resisted the most earnest solicitations to remove to a superior situation, and was charged with the care of a numerous and increasing family, the whole transaction cannot fail to impress the reader with admiration of the liberality in which the donation originated, and of the delicate reluctance with which it was accepted. The desire of wealth never took possession of his mind. Contented and thankful for that decent competence which he was at no time suffered to want, he was frugal without being parsimonious, and generous without profusion.

* See p. 345.

The system of his life was eminently uniform and tranquil, distinguished by few of the events and vicissitudes which are adapted in the recital to amuse or to agitate the reader. In the summer months he frequently rose at a very early hour, and was often met in his solitary walks in the neighbouring woods, by peasants who were "going forth to their work and to their labour till the evening." In these silent and retired scenes he took great delight; and from his observation of the beauties of nature, and the operations of husbandry, he frequently derived those images and illustrations which furnished a rich repast for his audience. Possessed of great sensibility, and a rich and lively imagination, he was accustomed, more than almost any other man, to clothe the abstractions of religion in the garb of sensible images, to illustrate his conceptions by frequent allusions to the most striking scenes in nature and in life. What is said of our Lord may almost be affirmed of him, that he taught the people in parables, and without a parable he spake not unto them. Truth compels me to confess that he sometimes carried this peculiarity to excess; but along with this concession it is but justice to observe, that the habit of appealing to the imagination was not only admirably adapted to a numerous class of subjects, but greatly contributed to that power of delectation which so eminently distinguished his ministry. His discourses were never vapid, tedious, or uninteresting. A certain intensity of devotional feeling, a

deep and solemn pathos, accompanied with tones expressive of the greatest sensibility, sustained the attention of the audience in full vigour.

It was his custom, during the greater part of his ministry, to devote the morning service to exposition, in the course of which he went very much at large through the life of Moses and of Christ, each of which occupied him several years. A great part of both Testaments was thus brought before the minds of his hearers. He was strongly impressed with a conviction of the advantages resulting from that mode of instruction, by its affording a more ample variety of topics, imparting a more profound and extensive acquaintance with the Scriptures, and enabling the teacher of religion to introduce many practical remarks, many minute points and details, which, however useful in the conduct of life, would with difficulty find a place in a regular discourse. It is evident from the writings of the Fathers, that this was the primitive mode of preaching, handed down to the christian church from the Jewish synagogue; and, wherever a people are more desirous of acquiring real knowledge than of a momentary excitement, it will be decidedly preferred. Unhappily, the taste of most hearers is the reverse: they are a sort of spiritual epicures, who prefer a poignant and stimulating, to a simple and nourishing, diet, and would infinitely rather have their passions awakened, than their conscience directed, or their understanding enlarged.

For this reason, expositions will generally be preferred by the intelligent part of an audience, and sermons by a promiscuous multitude. The peculiar talents of Mr. Toller qualified him, above most men, for combining the advantages of both methods, by infusing that degree of pathos and animation into his expository lectures which rendered them little less affecting than his sermons. Though he possessed, there is reason to believe, a competent knowledge of the Scriptures in their original tongues, yet from condescension to his audience, and his extreme abhorrence of whatever savours of pedantry, he was sparing of critical remarks, and availed himself less of the advantages of a liberal education and of incessant reading, for exact interpretations of the sacred volume, than he might with unexceptionable propriety have done. His expositions were practical and popular, not critical or elaborate. In order to preserve a unity of design, and to perpetuate an identity of impression, it was his usual practice to select some portion of the paragraph which he had been expounding in the former part of the day, as the basis of the afternoon discourse.

It would be great injustice to the memory of my invaluable friend, while speaking of his ministerial qualifications, not to mention his striking superiority in the discharge of the devotional part of his public functions, his almost unrivalled eminence in prayer. His addresses to the Supreme Being united every excellence of which they are susceptible:

they were copious without being redundant, fervent without extravagance, elevated without the least appearance of turgidity or pomp. He poured out his whole soul in an easy, unaffected flow of devotional sentiment; adoration seemed to be his natural element; and, as he appeared to lose all consciousness of any other presence but that of the Deity, he seldom failed to raise his audience to the same elevation, to make them realize the feelings of Jacob, when he exclaimed, "How awful is this place!" If this encomium admits of any abatement, it must be on the ground of their length, which was not unfrequently equal to that of his sermons. Nor was he less admirable in family devotion: many a time have I been surprised at the promptitude, ease, and grace, with which he would advert to the peculiar circumstances of the family, or of its principal members, with an allusion sometimes to minute incidents, without once impairing the solemnity, or detracting from the dignity, which ought ever to accompany a religious exercise. His petitions in behalf of each individual were stamped with something exclusively proper to his situation or character, so that, while he was concurring in an act of social worship, he felt, ere he was aware, as if he were left alone with God.

In his public discourses, he was apt to limit himself too much for time, either to do full justice to his subject, or to prolong the impression until it had completely incorporated itself with the mind

of the hearer: the curtain was let fall at the moment the scene was most interesting; and the current of emotion suddenly checked and interrupted, when it was just rising to its height. The mind is so constituted, that, in order to produce a permanent effect, a train of thought, however interesting, must occupy the attention for a considerable space: the soul kindles by degrees, and must pass through successive gradations of feeling before it reaches the utmost elevation of sublime and pathetic emotion. Hence it is that the most powerful speakers, in every age, have had recourse to a frequent repetition of the same arguments and topics, quite useless on any other account than its tendency to prolong the impression, and to render it by that means more durable and intense. Had Mr. Toller paid more attention to this principle of our constitution, I will not say he would have been a more interesting and delightful preacher,—for it is not easy to conceive how his sermons could have been much more impressive than they frequently were, during their delivery,—but their power over the audience would probably have been more lasting and more salutary. The defect which we have taken the liberty of noticing, may perhaps be ascribed to the habit of writing his sermons, a practice more favourable to accuracy of language, and condensation of thought, than to copiousness and expansion.

But it is time to return to our narrative, which a few words will despatch. During several of the

last years of his life, our excellent friend exhibited symptoms of a tendency to apoplexy; and in the year 1819, as he was going to his study, he was seized with a fit, which appeared instantly to deprive him of all sensation, to the inexpressible alarm of his family. But, before medical aid could be procured, his bodily strength and the possession of his mental powers were restored, and in two hours he displayed no indications of the awful event, except a degree of lassitude, and a slight contortion in the muscles about the mouth, both of which shortly disappeared. This circumstance, it is remarked by one of his friends, afforded a melancholy confirmation of their fears. They had long apprehended the seeds of apoplexy were lurking in his constitution, so that they looked upon this visitation as a voice from God, preparing them, by no doubtful warning, for the speedy dissolution of a connexion which had long been the source of so much improvement and delight.

The circumstances attending the last scene of his life, I cannot give better than in the words of a respectable friend from whom I received the account. "He had," says the writer of the following narrative, "for many years supposed it probable he should be subject to apoplexy or palsy. His fears fixed on the latter: and to his nearest friends he has often said, in allusion to these apprehensions, 'I do not fear, on the whole, to die; nor do I fear, I hope, to suffer, if I may but have the needful support from God; but if I

am doomed to a long scene of suffering, and to become a burden to myself and friends, I do fear that faith and patience may fail, and that I may at last dishonour the cause I have preached, and the Master whom I serve and love." The attack which has been mentioned removed the fear of palsy almost entirely: he was convinced the disorder was apoplexy; and the consequent conviction that such probably would be his end,—that, without pain or long affliction, he should, when his great Master had done with his services, be thus kindly dismissed,—had an immediate and an exhilarating effect upon his mind. After this, he had frequent seizures of the same kind, which lasted for a very short time, seldom more than five minutes in the whole; but they left evident traces on his bodily frame, though they had no other effect upon his mind than to confirm his hope of immediate dismission, "when his work was done." Near the close of the year 1820, one of these attacks left him so weak and shattered in constitution as to convince him he should never be able to resume his full pastoral duties again; and he in a very affectionate manner, communicated this conviction to his people. They immediately sought an assistant, and most naturally turned their attention to the son of their beloved pastor, who had been preaching at Wem, in Shropshire, for some time, but at that moment was visiting his father; to whom he had hurried, in dreadful doubt, from the account that he had received, whether he should see his

face any more. From this attack he gradually recovered, and continued for some weeks to gain strength. On Sunday, the 25th of February, he preached in the morning with all his usual animation, from Isa. lxiii. 7—13, and remarked, at the close of the discourse, what encouragement this passage affords the widow and the fatherless to put their trust in God, finishing his last public discourse with these words:—

> 'To thee our infant race we leave;
> Them may their fathers' God receive,
> That ages yet unborn may raise
> Successive hymns of humble praise.'

He spent the evening surrounded by his family, and conversing with his children in a strain of cheerful piety; and, after a night of sound repose, arose as well as usual the next morning. About noon, leaving the parlour, he was found, a few minutes after, in an apoplectic fit, or a seizure resembling apoplexy. Several medical men repaired to the spot, but life was extinct."

His remains were interred in the burying-ground belonging to the meeting-house, on Thursday, the 8th of March. On that occasion, the Rev. Mr. Horsey, of Northampton, engaged in prayer; the Rev. Mr. Edwards, of the same place, delivered the funeral oration; and the writer of these lines endeavoured to improve the providence by a suitable discourse. A considerable number of the clergy in the vicinity, and nearly all the dissenting

ministers of the county, attended the procession, which was rendered deeply affecting by the tears of a vast assembly, consisting of all the respectable inhabitants of the town, who felt, on this occasion, that they had lost a father and a friend.

Having already glanced at the most distinguishing features in the character of Mr. Toller, an elaborate delineation of it will neither be necessary nor expected.

It is remarkable, that though he invariably delivered his sermons from notes, to which he strictly adhered, his style of composition was eminently colloquial; it had all the careless ease, negligence, and occasional inaccuracy, which might be looked for in an extemporaneous address. He appears never to have turned his attention to composition as an art; and the force and beauty with which he sometimes expressed himself, was the spontaneous effect of a vivid imagination, accompanying the truest sensibility. His most affecting illustrations (and the power of illustrating a subject was his distinguishing faculty) were drawn from the most familiar scenes of life; and, after he became a father, not unfrequently from the incidents which attach to that relation. An example of this (supplied by the friend whose words have been already quoted) will afford the reader some idea of the manner in which he availed himself of images drawn from the domestic circle. His text was Isaiah xxvii. 5:—"Let him take hold of my strength, that he may make peace with me; and he

shall make peace with me."—"I think," said he, "I can convey the meaning of this passage so that every one may understand it, by what took place in my own family within these few days. One of my little children had committed a fault for which I thought it my duty to chastise him. I called him to me, explained to him the evil of what he had done, and told him how grieved I was that I must punish him for it. He heard me in silence, and then rushed into my arms, and burst into tears. I could sooner have cut off my arm than have then struck him for his fault: he had taken hold of my strength, and he had made peace with me."

He possessed great originality, not so much however in the stamina of his thoughts, as in the cast of his imagination. He seldom reminded you of any other speaker to whom he bore the slightest resemblance; his excellences and his defects rendered it equally evident that he had formed himself on no preceding model,—that he yielded without restraint to the native bias of his character and genius. The effect of imitation would, undoubtedly, have been the acquisition of more elegance and correctness, probably at the expense of higher qualities—of that noble simplicity and careless grandeur which were the distinguishing features of his eloquence. In the power of awakening pathetic emotions, he far excelled any speaker it has been my lot to hear. Often have I seen a whole congregation melted under him

like wax before the sun: my own feelings, on more than one occasion, have approached to an overpowering agitation. The effect was produced apparently with perfect ease. No elaborate preparation, no peculiar vehemence or intensity of tones, no artful accumulation of pathetic images led the way: the mind was captivated and subdued, it scarcely knew how. Though it will not be imagined that this triumph of popular eloquence could be habitual, much less constant, it may be safely affirmed that a large proportion of Mr. Toller's discourses afforded some indication of these powers.

Of the personal character of the subject of these memoirs, it may be observed, in general, that it was marked by none of the eccentricities which are supposed to be the appendages of genius, and that it consisted of a combination of amiable and pleasing, rather than of striking qualities. Candour, in all the modes of its operation, was a conspicuous feature. As his affection was extended to all, without exception, who "love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity," so he was particularly ingenious in putting the best construction on unfavourable appearances, in extenuating what he could not justify, and in discovering reasons for hoping well of those whom the honest but untempered zeal of many good men would prompt them to condemn. It was his delight to narrow the grounds of debate among sincere christians, to multiply the points of contact, and to detect the indications

of spiritual consanguinity and of a common origin, amidst the discrepancies which arise from real diversity of sentiment in some instances, and a diversity of language in more. Whether this benevolent solicitude to comprehend within the pale of salvation as many as possible, may not sometimes have led him to extenuate the danger of speculative error too much, may be fairly questioned. Since the charity which the Scriptures so earnestly inculcate, consists in a real solicitude for the welfare of others, not in thinking well of their state, he cannot be justly accused of a violation of its dictates, who contends that those doctrines are essential to salvation, on which his own hopes of it are exclusively founded.

There is another branch of candour which was eminently exemplified in the subject of the preceding Memoir. His tenderness in whatever concerned individual reputation was remarkable. He felt as much solicitude about the character of the absent as the feelings of the present: the wanton depreciation of their intellect or their virtue gave him visible pain; and, where he could not speak favourably of either, he was silent. Having no passion for display, he was never tempted to sacrifice his friend to his jest: his gayest sallies never inflicted a pang, nor occasioned a blush. His humour was a gentle and lambent flame, which cheered and exhilarated, but never scorched. Hence few men possessed more friends, or fewer enemies: it may be doubted whether, among the

numerous lists of the former, he lost the esteem of one. The friends of his youth who did not descend into the grave before him were the delight and solace of his age; and, in proportion as their ranks were thinned, he wisely consulted his happiness by cultivating the affection of a succeeding generation, by which he escaped that solitude and desertion which is the lot of those who shut their hearts against new attachments, neglect the good within their reach in a hopeless attempt to grasp a phantom, and perversely refuse to attach a value to any other pleasures than those which have withered under the blast of death.

It was not his practice to devote much of his time to ministerial visits. In justification of this part of his conduct, he was accustomed to quote the apostolic injunction: "Is any sick among you? let him *call* for the elders of the church," &c. He possessed, or fancied he possessed, little talent for the ordinary topics of religious conversation; and his extreme aversion to the ostentation of spirituality rendered him somewhat reluctant to engage in those recitals of christian experience in which many professors so much delight. There adhered to his natural disposition a delicacy and reserve, which rendered it impossible for him to disclose, except in the most confidential intercourse, the secret movements and aspirations of his heart towards the best of beings.

He possessed, notwithstanding this, a high relish for the pleasures of society. An inexhaustible

fund of anecdote, which he was wont to relate with a dry and comic humour, rendered him, in his livelier moments, a most fascinating companion. A great versatility of features combined with much power of imitation to give a peculiar poignance to the different incidents of his story. His imitations however were *specific*, not individual, seldom if ever descending to personal mimickry—an illiberal art, more befitting the buffoon than the christian or the gentleman. Mr. Toller's indulgence of these sallies was occasional, not habitual; they formed at times the seasoning of his conversation, not the staple commodity; and never were they carried so far as to impair the dignity of his character, or the reverence inspired by his virtues. They were invariably such as a virgin might listen to without a blush, and a saint without a sigh.

Mr. Toller was much of a practical philosopher. Deeply convinced of the vanity and imperfection of the present state, which he considered less as a scene of enjoyment than as a perpetual conflict with unavoidable evils, he was always disposed to make the best of passing events; to yield where resistance was unavailing; to beguile the sorrows which he could not remove; and, by setting the good against the evil, to blunt the arrows of adversity, and disarm disappointment of its sting. Possessing a genuine but not a sickly sensibility, he [shewed it rather] in enduring the vicissitudes of life with equanimity, than in any excessive delicacy or refinement of feeling.

"Speak evil of no man" is an injunction of which he never lost sight; and, without assuming the severity of reproof, he well knew how, by an expressive silence, to mark his aversion to scandal. He shewed a constant solicitude to give no offence to Jew or Gentile, or the household of God. Hence the efficacy of his ministry was never obstructed or impaired by the personal prejudice of his hearers; who regarded him not only with the deference due to a zealous and enlightened teacher, but with the affection of a friend. He was an ardent lover of peace. On no occasion did he offend by haughtiness, negligence, the indulgence of a capricious humour, or the sallies of intemperate anger. It has been asserted, by some that knew him in early life, that his original disposition was hasty and irritable. If this was the case, he affords a striking example of the conquest of religion and philosophy over the early tendencies of nature, since few men were equally distinguished by an unaffected sweetness and serenity of temper.

During every period of my acquaintance with him, he exhibited the most decided indications of piety; but in the latter stages of his life, this part of his character shone with distinguished lustre: devotion appeared to be his habitual element. Seldom has religion presented more of the lovely and attractive than in the character of Mr. Toller: if it did not inflame him with the zeal which distinguished more active and enterprising spirits, it melted him into love, clothed him with humility,

and decked him, in an eminent degree, with the "ornaments of a meek and quiet spirit."

It has rarely been the privilege of one town, and that not of considerable extent, to possess at the same time, and for so long a period, two such eminent men as Mr. Toller and Mr. Fuller. Their merits as christian ministers were so equal, and yet so different, that the exercise of their religious functions in the same place was as little adapted to produce jealousy as if they had moved in distant spheres. The predominant feature in the intellectual character of Mr. Fuller was the power of discrimination, by which he detected the minutest shades of difference among objects which most minds would confound: Mr. Toller excelled in exhibiting the common sense of mankind in a new and impressive form. Mr. Fuller never appeared to so much advantage as when occupied in detecting sophistry, repelling objections, and ascertaining with a microscopic accuracy the exact boundaries of truth and error: Mr. Toller attached his attention chiefly to those parts of christianity which come most into contact with the imagination and the feelings, over which he exerted a sovereign ascendency. Mr. Fuller convinced by his arguments; Mr. Toller subdued by his pathos. The former made his hearers feel the grasp of his intellect; the latter, the contagion of his sensibility. Mr. Fuller's discourses identified themselves, after they were heard, with trains of thought; Mr. Toller's with trains of emotion. The illustrations

employed by Mr. Fuller (for he also excelled in illustration) were generally made to subserve the clearer comprehension of his subject; those of Mr. Toller consisted chiefly of appeals to the imagination and the heart. Mr. Fuller's ministry was peculiarly adapted to detect hypocrites, to expose fallacious pretensions to religion, and to separate the precious from the vile; he sat as "the refiner's fire and the fuller's soap:" Mr. Toller was most in his element when exhibiting the consolations of Christ, dispelling the fears of death, and painting the prospects of eternity. Both were original: but the originality of Mr. Fuller appeared chiefly in his doctrinal statements; that of Mr. Toller in his practical remarks. The former was unquestionably most conversant with speculative truth; the latter perhaps possessed the deeper insight into the human heart.

Nor were the characters of these eminent men, within the limits of that moral excellence which was the attribute of both, less diversified than their mental endowments. Mr. Fuller was chiefly distinguished by the qualities which command veneration; Mr. Toller by those which excite love. Laborious, zealous, intrepid, Mr. Fuller passed through a thousand obstacles in the pursuit of objects of public interest and utility; Mr. Toller loved to repose, delighting and delighted, in the shade of domestic privacy. The one lived for the world; the other for the promotion of the good of his congregation, his family, and friends. An

intense zeal for the advancement of the kingdom of Christ, sustained by industry that never tired, a resolution not to be shaken, and integrity incapable of being warped, conjoined to a certain austerity of manner, were the leading characteristics of Mr. Fuller: gentleness, humility, and modesty, those of Mr. Toller. The secretary of the Baptist Mission attached, in my opinion, too much importance to a speculative accuracy of sentiment; while the subject of this Memoir leaned to the contrary extreme. Mr. Fuller was too prone to infer the character of men from their creed; Mr. Toller to lose sight of their creed in their character. Between persons so dissimilar, it was next to impossible a very close and confidential intimacy should subsist: a sincere admiration of each other's talents, and esteem for the virtues which equally adorned them both, secured without interruption, for more than thirty years, those habits of kind and respectful intercourse which had the happiest effect in promoting the harmony of their connexions and the credit of religion.

Much as Mr. Fuller was lamented by the religious public in general, and especially in his own denomination, I have reason to believe there was not a single individual, out of the circle of his immediate relatives, who was more deeply affected by his death than Mr. Toller. From that moment he felt himself nearer to eternity; he accepted the event as a most impressive warning of his own dissolution; and, while a thousand solemn and

affecting recollections accompanied the retrospect of a connexion which had so long and so happily subsisted, one of his favourite occupations was to revive a mental intercourse, by the frequent perusal of the sermons of his deceased friend. It is thus that the friendship of high and sanctified spirits loses nothing by death but its alloy: failings disappear, and the virtues of those whose "faces we shall behold no more" appear greater and more sacred when beheld through the shades of the sepulchre. Their spirits are now united before the throne; and if any event in this sublunary scene may be supposed to engage the attention of the subject of this Memoir, in his present mysterious elevation, it is probably the desire that the child of his prayers, who now succeeds him in his office, may surpass his example, and be the honoured instrument of turning more sinners to righteousness, and of conducting more sons to glory, than himself.

MR. TOLLER'S LETTER,

Referred to in p. 325.

My dear Sir,

It would be idle in me to affect ignorance of the business which has principally occasioned your visit to Kettering just now; and though it may seem indelicate to interfere during the discussion of that business, yet I cannot with an easy mind suffer the intended meeting to take place on Monday, without offering a few observations on what may be called, in parliamentary language, "the previous question."

Considering the proposed measure as originating with you and some other friends, I can view it in no other light than as a noble instance of the most unquestionably disinterested friendship and affection; and let the result be what it may, I shall retain a deep and lasting sense of it as such: but, at the same time, I cannot but feel a painful apprehension, that what you mean for nothing but good, should be the incidental occasion of real harm: that is, the probable means of disturbing the harmony and peace which at present exist in my congregation.

There are some amongst us whose inclination would prompt them to support any measure for the benefit of me or my family, but whose general circumstances are, like my own, comfortable and competent: indeed, just sufficient to fill up the annual supply, with a little besides to assist the poor and needy, but who could not advance any thing like a round sum, which would tell on an occasion like this. Some such, I am afraid, would be grieved to contribute nothing; and yet more than a trifle would be a real inconvenience. There are others in superior circumstances, and by no means backward to do good in the abstract; but who, from

education, economical habits, and other causes, have never been accustomed to do so on a large scale ; and who, from an apprehension of there being no direct and immediate necessity in the case, would be hurt, and perhaps disgusted, at the suggestion that a handsome sum was expected from them. Now, any instance of this sort would grate more upon my mind than the friendship of others would gratify it ; nor could I prevail upon myself to receive a single shilling from a reluctant hand if I knew it, or as the result of solicitation and admonition : and if any thing of the kind goes forward in a way satisfactory to me, it must be on a ground which is hardly attainable perhaps in any similar case, namely, that every subscriber be, in the fullest sense, a volunteer ; for I can most truly say, that I had a thousand times rather matters should rest as they are, than that the plan should advance a single step at the risk of exciting sensations or producing effects similar to those alluded to above : and therefore, on this ground, if it shall appear to you and other friends prudent to adjourn the further consideration of the business to a future day, be assured that such a resolution will not give me the slightest pain.

I have now told you all my heart, and shall leave the event with Providence and your discretion ; only repeating that I shall never cease to admire the principles by which you and others have been actuated, and shall retain a lasting sense of obligation for the kindness of your intention.

I am, with best wishes and prayers,

Yours most affectionately,

THOS. N. TOLLER.

P. S. You are at full liberty to shew this letter to whomsoever you think proper : indeed, with that view I write it.

PREFACE TO THE MEMOIRS

OF

THE REV. JOSEPH FREESTON.

[WRITTEN IN 1821.]

OF all the species of literary composition, perhaps biography is the most delightful. The attention concentrated on one individual gives a unity to the materials of which it is composed, which is wanting in general history. The train of incidents through which it conducts the reader suggests to his imagination a multitude of analogies and comparisons; and, while he is following the course of events which mark the life of him who is the subject of the narrative, he is insensibly compelled to take a retrospect of his own. In no other species of writing are we permitted to scrutinize the character so exactly, or to form so just and accurate an estimate of the excellencies and defects, the lights and shades, the blemishes and beauties, of an individual mind.

The progress of a human being, in his passage through time to eternity, only requires to be exhibited with fidelity, in order to become an interesting object to a contemplative mind; whatever

may have been the moral or intellectual qualities of the individual, and however degraded by vice, or exalted by piety and virtue. Conquests achieved, or objects attained,—conscience cowering under the tyranny of the passions, or asserting her dignity by subjecting them to her sway,—are equally instructive; providing the reader is informed by what steps virtuous or vicious habits were superinduced, by what stratagems temptation prevailed, or by what efforts and expedients it was repelled. The moral warfare which every rational and accountable creature has to sustain, pregnant with consequences which reach to eternity, possesses an intrinsic and essential importance, totally independent of the magnitude of the events, or the publicity and splendour of the scenes to which it is attached. The moral history of a beggar, which faithfully revealed the interior movements of his mind, and laid open the secret causes which contributed to form and determine his character, might enlarge and enlighten the views of a philosopher. Whatever tends to render our acquaintance with any portion of our species more accurate and profound, is an accession to the most valuable part of our knowledge; and, though to know ourselves has ever been deemed of the most consequence, it may be doubtful whether the power of self-examination is ever exerted with so much vigour as when it is called into action by the exhibition of individual character. The improvement derived from narrative, in this view, will be proportional to the degree

in which the objects described, and the incidents related, bear a resemblance to those with which the reader is conversant; and, for this reason, the biography of private persons, though less dazzling, is more instructive to the majority of readers, than that of such as are distinguished by the elevation of their rank and the splendour of their achievements. Few require to be taught the arts by which the favour of princes is conciliated, or the machinations of rival candidates for power defeated; few need to be warned against the errors and mistakes which have produced the loss of battles or the failure of negociations. Events of this order may fill the imagination, and diffuse their dignity and pathos over the page of history; but they afford little useful instruction to the bulk of mankind. But, when a character selected from the ordinary ranks of life is faithfully and minutely delineated, no effort is requisite to enable us to place ourselves in the same situation: we accompany the subject of the narrative with an interest undiminished by distance, unimpaired by dissimilarity of circumstances; and, from the efforts by which he surmounted difficulties and vanquished temptations, we derive the most useful practical lessons.

He who desires to strengthen his virtue and purify his principles will always prefer the solid to the specious; will be more disposed to contemplate an example of the unostentatious piety and goodness which all men may obtain, than of those

extraordinary achievements to which few can aspire: nor is it the mark of a superior, but rather of a vulgar and superficial taste, to consider nothing as great or excellent, but that which glitters with titles or is elevated by rank.

The biography of such as have been eminent for piety has ever been a favourite species of reading with those who possess a devotional spirit. "As face answers to face in a glass, so does the heart of man to man." To trace the steps by which a piety feeble in its rudiments has attained to maturity,—to observe the holy arts by which devout habits were strengthened and temptations defeated,—to discern the power of truth in purifying and transforming the minds of such as have attained to high degrees of sanctity,—is equally delightful and edifying. To the real christian, experimental religion opens a new world, replete with objects, emotions, and prospects, of which none but those who are taught of God can form any just or adequate conception; and the joys and sorrows, the elevations and depressions, the dangers and escapes, incident to the spiritual warfare, produce in congenial breasts a lively sympathy.

Publications of this nature have accordingly met for the most part with a welcome reception, and have become one of the most popular and powerful instruments of piety. The religious public have long learned to form a just estimate of the Diary of Mr. Williams, of Kidderminster, an industrious and opulent manufacturer, who demonstrated the

possibility of combining a prudent attention to commercial pursuits with a splendid exhibition of the christian graces. The masculine sense, the fervent piety, the active benevolence of that most excellent man, will long contribute to enlighten and to animate christians in a private rank, and to shed a lustre on the religious profession. A more perfect example perhaps was never exhibited to the imitation of active tradesmen. A devotion fervent but rational, zeal tempered by the exactest discretion, and a benevolence invariably regulated by the dictates of prudence and justice,—a transparent candour without weakness, and a wisdom without art,—combine to form a living picture of exalted yet attainable excellence.

The Life and Diary of David Brainerd, missionary to the American Indians, exhibits a perfect pattern of the qualities which should distinguish the instructor of rude and barbarous tribes; the most invincible patience and self-denial, the profoundest humility, exquisite prudence, indefatigable industry, and such a devotedness to God, or rather such an absorption of the whole soul in zeal for the divine glory and the salvation of men, as is scarcely to be paralleled since the age of the apostles. Such was the intense ardour of his mind, that it seems to have diffused the spirit of a martyr over the most common incidents of his life. His constitutional melancholy, though it must be regarded as a physical imperfection, imparts an additional interest and pathos to the

narrative; since we more easily sympathize with the emotions of sorrow than of joy. There is a monotony in his feelings, it must be acknowledged, and consequently a frequent repetition of the same ideas, which will disgust a fastidious or superficial reader; but it is the monotony of sublimity.

The Life of Fletcher, of Madely, affords in some respects a parallel, in others a contrast, to that of Brainerd: and it is curious to observe how the influence of natural temperament varies the exhibition of the same principles. With a considerable difference in their religious views, the same zeal, the same spirituality of mind, the same contempt of the world, is conspicuous in the character of each. But the lively imagination, the sanguine complexion of Fletcher, permits him to triumph and exult in the consolatory truths and prospects of religion. He is a seraph who burns with the ardours of divine love; and, spurning the fetters of mortality, he almost habitually seems to have anticipated the rapture of the beatific vision. Brainerd, oppressed with a constitutional melancholy, is chiefly occupied with the thoughts of his pollutions and defects in the eyes of Infinite Purity. His is a mourning and conflicting piety, imbued with the spirit of self-abasement, breathing itself forth in "groanings which cannot be uttered;" always dissatisfied with itself, always toiling in pursuit of a purity and perfection unattainable by mortals. The mind of Fletcher was habitually brightened with gratitude and joy for what he had

attained; Brainerd was actuated with a restless solicitude for farther acquisitions. If Fletcher soared to all the heights, it may be affirmed, with equal truth, that Brainerd sounded all the depths, of christian piety: and, while the former was regaling himself with fruit from the tree of life, the latter, on the waves of an impetuous sea, was "doing business in the mighty waters."

Both equally delighted and accustomed to lose themselves in the contemplation of the Deity, they seemed to have surveyed that Infinite Object under different aspects; and while Fletcher was absorbed in the contemplation of infinite benignity and love, Brainerd shrunk into nothing in the presence of immaculate purity and holiness.

The different situation in which they were placed, had probably considerable effect in producing or heightening their respective peculiarities. Fletcher exercised his ministry in the calm of domestic life, surrounded with the beauties of nature; Brainerd pursued his mission in a remote and howling wilderness, where, in the midst of uncultivated savages, he was exposed to intolerable hardships and fatigues.

The religious public have lately been favoured with a rich accession to the recorded monuments of exalted piety, in the Life and Religious Experience of the lamented Henry Martyn. It is delightful to behold, in the history of that extraordinary man, talents, which attracted the admiration of one of the most celebrated seats of learning, consecrated

to the honour of the cross; an enterprising genius, in the ardour of youth, relinquishing the pursuit of science and of fame, in order to travel in the steps of a Brainerd and a Schwartz. Crowned with the highest honours a university could bestow, we see him quit the luxurious shades of academic bowers, for a tempestuous ocean and a burning clime,—for a life of peril and fatigue, from which he could expect no other reward than the heroic pleasure of communicating to perishing millions the word of eternal life. He appears to have formed his religious character chiefly on the model of Brainerd: and as he equalled him in his patience, fortitude, humility, and love, so he strictly resembled him in his end. Both, nearly at the same age, fell victims to a series of intolerable privations and fatigues, voluntarily incurred in the course of their exertions for the propagation of the faith of Jesus. And though their death was not a violent one, the sacrifices they made, and the sufferings they endured, entitle them to the honours and rewards of a protracted martyrdom. Their memory will be cherished by the veneration of all succeeding ages; and he who reads their lives will be ready to exclaim, '*Here* is the faith and patience of the saints.'

If the biography of men such as these fails to produce all the benefit we might expect, some will be ready to impute it to that hopeless superiority of character which seems to place them almost above the reach of imitation. The justice of the

inference, however, may be fairly questioned, since he who proposes for his imitation a model approaching to perfection, though he may not equal, will, probably, in the fervour of his exertions to copy it, take a higher flight than if he had contented himself with the contemplation of an inferior standard. He who forms his taste on the inimitable productions of a Raphael, will reach nearer to perfection than he could arrive by the study of an inferior artist: and, for the purpose of restoring man to the image of his Maker, the wisdom of God has thought fit to exhibit a faultless model in the character of the incarnate Redeemer.

Before I dismiss the reader to the perusal of the following narrative, it may not be improper to apprize him of what he is to expect. If he hopes to be amused by the recital of striking occurrences and eventful passages, he will find himself disappointed. The following is not the history of a man bustling on the busy stage of life, and exposed to great vicissitudes of good or evil fortune: it is the simple unpretending narrative of a dissenting minister, who passed his days in the retirement of the country, in tranquil meditation, in the exercise of unostentatious piety, and an assiduous attention to the spiritual improvement of his flock. Though he did not enjoy the benefit of a liberal education, my revered friend was possessed of an active inquisitive mind, which prompted him to devote much of his time to reading, and enabled him to acquire a large fund of general, but especially of

theological, knowledge. Few men, in similar circumstances, have availed themselves, to an equal extent, of the information which the best books in our language, on moral and religious subjects, supply. Reading, with him, was not merely a habit, but a passion. His curiosity was not limited within the circle of his profession: he was delighted with works on general literature, and purchased and perused some of the valuable elementary treatises on science. But, as devotion was his peculiar element, it is not to be wondered at that theology in its various branches was his favourite study. Though he was far from neglecting the antiquities and the criticism of theology, as far as they are accessible to a mere English scholar, he placed his principal delight in the perusal of works immediately devoted to the inculcation of doctrinal and experimental religion: and in this pursuit his attention was forcibly drawn to the writings of the puritan divines, who, with all their imperfections of style and method, are unquestionably the safest of all uninspired guides. The masculine sense, the profound learning, the rich and unequalled unction of these fathers of the modern church, exerted a powerful influence on his mind, and greatly contributed to form and mature his character.

Of the great Mr. Howe, who shines in the firmament with a preeminent and unrivalled lustre, he always spoke in terms of just admiration, assigning him that preference among the nonconformist divines, which it is surprising any one

should dispute. The reader of the succeeding narrative will perceive, that for many years it was his constant practice to devote a considerable portion of each day to the perusal of the best practical writers; to which, under God, he was undoubtedly indebted for that habitual spirituality of mind which so remarkably distinguished him, and in which very few, whom I have had the happiness of knowing, appeared to equal, none to surpass him. His sense of the divine presence, his relish for devout meditation and intercourse, his advertence to the great realities of a future life, seemed scarcely ever to forsake him; and the least that can be affirmed of him is, that "he walked with God."

Though he exercised his ministry, through the whole of his life, amongst the general baptists, his sentiments approached nearer to those of Mr. Baxter than to the system of Arminius, nor would his statements of christian doctrine have given the slightest offence to a congregation of moderate calvinists. But to polemical theology he was not attached; his religion was entirely of a practical and experimental character: nor did he attach the smallest importance to correct views of christian doctrine, any further than as they tended to influence the heart. To socinianism, in all its modifications, he entertained a most hearty and decided aversion, and few circumstances gave him more poignant uneasiness than to see some of the most conspicuous members of his church embrace and patronise that destructive heresy. In the latter

years of his life he devoted a considerable portion of his time to composition; and his tract on Socinianism, his Directions and Encouragements for Travellers to Zion, his Advice to a young Minister, with other publications of a similar tendency,—the result of long experience, of much well-digested reading, and of patient thought,—will perpetuate and enrol his name among the most useful practical writers of the present day. Fond as he was of retirement, he retained a keen relish for the pleasures of society, for which he was eminently fitted by the gentleness of his manners, the amenity of his temper, and the variety of his knowledge. His conversation expressed and inspired serenity and cheerfulness rather than mirth; and he possessed, to a very extraordinary degree, the happy of greatest relaxation. The natural temperament of my revered friend inclined in some degree, I have been informed, to the irascible; but who ever beheld him betrayed for a moment into language or deportment incompatible with the meekness of the gospel? His exquisite sensibility is abundantly conspicuous in the following narrative, nor could it escape the observation of any person who enjoyed much of his intimacy; but it was so directed and refined, by a higher principle, as to become one of the most attractive qualities in his character.

The extreme depression of the manufacture in the place of his residence, was a source of much uneasiness; both by the intense sympathy he felt

for the sufferers, and the degree in which it affected his personal resources. It is painful to reflect that a man "of whom the world was not worthy," perhaps never received from his people more than a moiety of the means of his subsistence; and that, after sinking the greater part of his scanty property, he must often have been involved in irretrievable difficulties, but for the casual liberality of friends whom his superior merit had attached. That, in a situation so full of embarrassment and perplexity, he retained a curiosity so eager, a passion for study and inquiry so unabated, as to induce him to spend a large sum of money in the purchase of books, is a decisive proof of his possessing a mind of no ordinary vigour. But I check myself. It was not my intention to write an encomium on the excellent person who is the subject of the following Memoir, but merely to introduce it to the reader's attention, by a few prefatory remarks; and, having already trespassed too long on his patience, I must be permitted to close, by expressing my earnest prayer that the effect of its perusal on as many as read it, may be to assimilate their minds, in some degree at least, to the character of its excellent and lamented author.

EXTRACT

FROM MR. HALL'S ROUGH NOTES

OF THE

FUNERAL SERMON FOR DR. RYLAND.

EARLY in life he formed an intimacy with a set of writers, who, however they may push some theoretical views to excess, are eminent for their elevated ideas of the moral character of the Deity, and for the zeal with which they contend for its influence on doctrinal and practical religion. Firm champions of disinterested love, they set themselves, with the greatest ardour, to expose those religious affections, which are founded on mere selfishness, and which are excited merely by the conviction their possessors entertain of their having been the object of the divine predilection, without any perception of the excellence and moral beauty of the divine nature. They laid, as the foundation of all vital religion, a perception of moral beauty, a complacency in the Deity on account of his own intrinsic excellence, which, they contend,

is a separate principle from mere gratitude for benefits expected or received, however it may enlarge and extend it. The originality displayed by these writers, at the head of whom the celebrated Edwards is placed by universal consent, — the acumen of their logic, and the fervour of their piety,—seized powerfully on the mind of Dr. Ryland in his early years, and gave a decisive turn to his subsequent studies and pursuits. From that time to the close of his life, the relation which christianity bears to the display of the divine character was ever present to his thoughts: he delighted in whatever tended to deepen and enlarge his conceptions of that ineffable original; he delighted especially to contemplate him under the character in which John presents him, when he affirms that "God is love,"—as a being possessing an infinite propensity to impart his "fulness," by diffusing the greatest possible sum of happiness throughout his vast dominions. These lofty musings were, with him, not the object of speculation only, or the discriminating features of a creed. He formed the interior of his character upon them; they were his mental aliment, and intimately incorporated with his thoughts. Nor can it be doubted that, in a mind so prepared by divine grace as was his, they exercised a most [beneficial] influence, and produced a luxuriant crop of christian virtues. He appeared to be penetrated with a perpetual sense of the divine presence; not as a source of terror or dismay, but of habitual peace, confidence, and

joy. "He endured as seeing him that is invisible." His love to the Great Supreme was equally exempt from slavish timidity and presumptuous familiarity. It was an awful love, such, in a very inferior degree, as the beatific vision must be supposed to inspire, trembling with ecstasy, while prostrate with awe.

[*Compare the above with* pp. 404, 405, *and* 392, Vol. I.]

AN ADDRESS,

CIRCULATED AT THE FORMATION OF THE LEICESTER AUXILIARY BIBLE SOCIETY, FEBRUARY 19, 1810.

We feel peculiar satisfaction in announcing to the public the formation of an Auxiliary Bible Society at Leicester, the object of which is, to cooperate with the Parent Society in London, in giving as extensive a circulation as possible to the Holy Scriptures. Notwithstanding the diversity of sentiment which unhappily prevails among christians, we may fairly presume on the concurrence of all parties and denominations in promoting a design so disinterested as that of diffusing the light of revelation. In the prosecution of this design, our party is the world; the only distinction we contemplate, is between the disciples of revelation, and the unhappy victims of superstition and idolatry; and, as we propose to circulate the Bible without notes or comments, truth only can be a gainer by the measure. To those who confine their views to this country, the want of Bibles may not appear very urgent; but, without insisting on the many thousands even *here* who are destitute of

them; it is certain, that in pagan, mahometan, and popish countries, they are extremely rare, and their number totally inadequate, not merely to supply the immense population in those parts, but even the increasing demand which a variety of circumstances have combined to produce. To supply this demand, to whatever extent it may be carried, is the aim of the society in London with which this is designed to cooperate. Their ambition, as far as it may please God to smile upon their efforts, is, by imparting the Holy Scriptures, to open the fountain of revelation to all nations. It was natural and necessary for the first movement in so great an enterprise to commence at the heart of the empire; nor is it less so, that, having commenced there, it should propagate itself through the larger vessels and arteries to the remotest extremities of the body. We have the pleasure of perceiving, that the example of the metropolis has already been followed in several of our principal towns and cities; and there is room to hope that similar institutions will, ere long, be formed in every part of the kingdom. Nor has the emulation excited been confined to this nation and its dependencies; societies of the same description have been formed at Philadelphia, at Berlin, and at Basle, each of which derives support and assistance from the original one established in the metropolis of Great Britain. While so general an alacrity has been evinced on this occasion, it had ill become the character of the town of Leicester to stand

neuter, highly distinguished as it is for its great and ancient respectability, as well as for the extent of its establishments, and exertions in the cause of religion and charity. We have the pleasure of reflecting, that the meeting, so obligingly called by the mayor, was numerously and respectably attended, that the utmost harmony prevailed in its proceedings, and that there appeared throughout an utter oblivion of party distinctions, with an emulation in each individual to promote to the utmost the purposes for which we were convened.

In whatever light we consider the British and Foreign Bible Society, it appears to us replete with utility. Its formation will, we trust, constitute a new æra in the history of religion, which may be styled the æra of unanimity. It affords a rallying point for the piety of the age, an unsuspicious medium of communication between the good of all parties and nations, a centre of union and cooperation in the advancement of a common cause, which cannot fail to allay the heats, and smooth the asperities, of discordant sentiment. By giving the most effectual aid to means already set on foot for the conversion of pagan nations, it also promises to accelerate the period when truth shall become victorious in the earth. When the pure light of revelation once shines amid the darkness of polytheism, we may venture to hope that the latter will be gradually expelled, that the contrast of truth and error, of sacred mysteries and preposterous fictions, they respectively display, will be deeply and extensively

felt. What the Bible Society proposes, let it be remembered, is not to circulate such a number of copies of the New Testament in foreign parts as shall merely suffice to gratify the curiosity of the learned, to adorn a museum, or to enrich a library; but to lay them open, if possible, to all classes of society in every nation. What incalculable benefits may be expected to result from the completion of such a plan! Wherever the Scriptures are generally read, the standard of morals is raised, the public mind is expanded, a spirit of inquiry excited, and the sphere of intellectual vision inconceivably enlarged. While they contribute most essentially to the improvement of reason, by presenting to its contemplation the noblest objects, they aid its weakness, and supply its deficiencies, by information beyond its reach. If "to know the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he has sent," be, as our Saviour assures us, "eternal life," to adopt effectual measures for imparting that knowledge, must be allowed to be the most genuine exercise of benevolence. It is to be lamented that protestant nations have been too long inattentive to this object: we rejoice to find that they are now convinced of their error; and that, touched with commiseration for the unhappy condition of mankind, they are anxious to impart those riches which may be shared without being diminished, and communicated without being lost to the possessor. Such is the felicity of religion,—such the unbounded liberality of its principles. Though we

should be sorry to administer fuel to national vanity, we cannot conceal the satisfaction it gives us to reflect, that, while the fairest portion of the globe has fallen a prey to that guilty and restless ambition, which, by the inscrutable wisdom of Providence, is permitted, for a time, to take peace from the earth, this favoured country is employed in spreading the triumphs of truth, multiplying the means of instruction, and opening sources of consolation to an afflicted world. In these eventful times, so pregnant with difficulty and danger, we consider this as affording a most favourable omen of the ultimate intentions of Providence respecting this nation.

Having briefly explained our object and motives, we beg leave to recommend the Leicester Auxiliary Bible Society to the patronage of an enlightened public, not doubting they will feel the propriety of lending their support to an institution, which, besides the circulation of the Scriptures abroad, promises to provide for our domestic wants, by enabling the poorest person to possess himself of that invaluable treasure.

A SPEECH,

DELIVERED AT

THE SECOND ANNIVERSARY MEETING OF THE LEICESTER AUXILIARY BIBLE SOCIETY,

April 13, 1812.

PERMIT me to say that I heartily concur in the sentiments so forcibly expressed by the respectable speakers who have preceded me. The more I reflect upon the constitution, operation, and genius, of the Bible Society, the more is my conviction confirmed of its excellence and utility. It is matter of surprise to me, that an institution so admirable, and so beneficial, should meet with the least opposition from the professors of our common christianity, when the propriety of making the Scriptures as extensively known as possible might be supposed to pass among protestants for an incontrovertible maxim. To imagine such a measure can be carried into effect without being productive of much good, and still more to augur mischievous consequences as the probable result, approaches so near to an impeachment of the perfection and sufficiency of the divine oracles, that, to my poor judgement, it appears difficult, if not impossible, to distinguish them. For my part, I am at an utter loss to conceive of a revelation from heaven *that must not be*

trusted alone; of a rule of life and manners which, in the same breath, is declared to be perfect, and yet so obscure and incompetent that its tendency to mislead shall be greater than its tendency to conduct in the right path; of a fountain of truth (and the only original fountain, as our opponents themselves allow) more calculated, when left to its silent operation, to send forth bitter waters than sweet. If these must appear to a candid and impartial mind untenable and contradictory propositions, then must the chief objections of our opponents fall to the ground, and their prognostics of danger, from the operations of the Bible Society, be pronounced chimerical and unfounded. Whoever weighs the arguments of our opponents must be convinced that they all turn upon the following supposition—that the Scriptures are so ambiguous and obscure that, when left to themselves, they are more likely to generate error than truth, to foment division than to produce unanimity and agreement. If this implies no reflection on the excellence of the Bible, and the wisdom of its Divine Author, what, I will ask, can imply such a reflection? And, if this be not admitted, how is it possible, for a moment, to entertain a scruple respecting the propriety of giving them the most extensive circulation?

To dread the indiscriminate perusal of the Scriptures, and, under pretence of tender consideration for the weakness of the common people, prohibit their circulation, has always been regarded as one of the most detestable features of popery. From

the very dawn of the Reformation it has been stigmatized by protestants, of every description, as constituting a principal branch of the mystery of iniquity. But wherein does the maxim of our opponents differ from that of the papists on this subject? If any difference can be perceived, it is certainly not in the *nature* but in the *extension* of the principle. The papists contend that the common people are not to be intrusted with the Bible *at all;* while our opponents assert that they are not to be trusted with it *alone.* The former instruct their votaries to shut their ears against the voice of God altogether; the latter insist that it is dangerous to hear it, except in immediate conjunction with their own interpretation. Surely this must be considered as strange language in a protestant country, and most offensive to protestant ears.

What is the reason that the Scriptures may not be trusted alone? 'Why,' say our opponents, 'they are liable to be misinterpreted, and wrested to countenance the respective opinions and practices of different sects and parties.' Be it so: we admit this to be possible; but what remedy can be devised to obviate this evil? Is their use to be entirely proscribed? 'No,' say our opponents, 'but they must be invariably accompanied by another book, which may be considered in the light of an authorized commentary.' But we would ask, again, are we to judge of this commentary; or are we to receive it simply on the ground of authority, and upon the principle of implicit faith; or is any exercise of

private judgement permitted to us? If it be replied that it is not, this is neither more nor less than open and barefaced popery. If the judgement is to be exerted at all, and every thing is not to be taken upon trust, their commentary must be judged of by some criterion, and what can that be but the Scriptures? The Scriptures must then, after all, be appealed to, before it is possible to determine on the correctness of the commentary; and thus we are led back to the precise point from which we set out, that is, the examination of the Scriptures. According to the views of our opponents, we are either to admit the principle of implicit faith to its utmost extent, which is open and avowed popery; or we are first to interpret the Scriptures by the commentary, and then judge of the commentary by the Scriptures. This is the circle, out of which it is impossible for our opponents to escape, and they may be lashed round it to all eternity! Let it once be admitted that the sacred volume is the only standard of truth, and the only infallible directory in practice, and it will necessarily follow that all other modes of instruction must be tried by it; and consequently that every idea of giving it a corrective, or a companion, call it which you please, must be futile and absurd. I am persuaded I am speaking the sentiments, on this occasion, of every individual who composes this meeting, and not abetting the views of any particular party. I trust none in the present assembly will do me the injustice of supposing that any reflection is intended upon the

liturgy: though a protestant dissenter, I am by no means insensible to its merits. I believe that the evangelical purity of its sentiments, the chastised fervour of its devotion, and the majestic simplicity of its language, have combined to place it in the very first rank of uninspired compositions. The maxim we wish to establish, as amply sufficient to overrule the objections of our opponents, is simply that, which, in the hands of the immortal Chillingworth, was found capable of demolishing the whole fabric of popery. "The Bible," said he, "the Bible alone, is the religion of protestants."

The conduct of those who have distinguished themselves by their opposition to the Bible Society is also inconsistent in another point. While they deprecate the operations of the Bible Society, in circulating the Bible alone in this country, they applaud this very identical measure in its application to foreign parts. This appears to me a very extraordinary conduct. Their proceeding can only be justified on the admission that, notwithstanding the possible perversion of the scripture to ill purposes, it is calculated, when left to itself, to do good on the whole. In this instance, it is conceded that its use more than counterbalances the possible inconveniences arising from its abuse; a clear surplus of good is contemplated as the probable result, for, without such an expectation, how can the measure in question be entitled to commendation for a moment? I would ask, then, what principle of reasoning is that which will justify an

opposition to the scheme of action which, it is admitted, is likely on the whole to do good, although it may possibly be accompanied with a portion of evil allowedly inferior. Are not all the calculations of prudence founded on a comparison of advantages and disadvantages? Have not all the plans of benevolence, which have ever been devised, proceeded on a necessary compromise with contingent evils, where, if it can be demonstrated that these bear no proportion to the good likely to result, every requisition is satisfied, and every reasonable suffrage secured? Are we to sit still, and attempt nothing for the improvement of our species, until we are mathematically certain that nothing can possibly spring from our efforts but pure, unmingled, defecated good; and this in a world abounding with imperfections of all sorts, where evil is so widely diffused as to insinuate itself into every mode of action, and every element of enjoyment? If this is not pretended, why should it be deemed necessary for the operations of the Bible Society to furnish an exception; or that it should be perfectly free from that portion of inconvenience and evil which cleaves to all the works of men? When our enemies object to the distribution of the Scriptures alone in this country, and, at the same time, applaud the same measures with respect to foreign parts, they surely forget that the same objections apply, and with equal force, to the latter, as to the former proceeding. The obscurity of which they complain, which exposes them to the

danger of being misinterpreted, their liability to be wrested to countenance error, heresy, and schism, are properties which, I presume, we shall not be very ready to ascribe to them. But, admitting them to possess these qualities, will they lose them by being conveyed to distant countries? Is their tendency to be pronounced pernicious or salutary, according to the degrees of latitude and longitude? Are there not a variety of sects and parties on the Continent, as well as in Great Britain, to whose views the perversion of them may be rendered subservient? Is the information they afford in this country doubtful and obscure; and does it become at once clear and decisive when it is communicated in foreign parts? As our opponents seem to suppose they possess a valetudinarian habit, and require a very delicate management in this country, perhaps they imagine their constitution may be improved by a sea-voyage, and change of air!

Let it be carefully remembered, that the topics insisted upon by the objectors to the Bible Society, are precisely those on which the papists have been wont to insist in their controversy with protestants: the obscurity of the Scriptures, the danger of misinterpretation, and the facility with which they may be wrested to the support of heresy and schism. It is surely little to the credit of our opponents, that they have no other weapons to attack us with, but what have been undeniably forged in the camp of the Philistines. It would, unquestionably, be an ill omen to this country, if pleas, drawn from

the supposed insufficiency of scripture, should be again received, and become popular, which have been the principal means, in former ages, of involving the world in the darkness of superstition and idolatry. The perversion of the Bible can proceed only from the corruption of its readers:—now, what is the remedy for this corruption, but the Scriptures themselves? Have they, who oppose our proceeding, discovered, in the plenitude of their wisdom, any better corrective of the ill propensities of the heart, the attachment to vice, the conceit of superior understanding, and the love of change, which are the prolific sources of error, than those lively oracles which God himself has declared are able to make us wise unto salvation? "The heavens and the earth," it is true, "declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth his handywork." This effect, however, they must be understood to produce only in minds rightly disposed; for, in point of fact, they have been the innocent means of enticing millions to idolatry, while they never, as far as we know, reclaimed a single individual from that impiety. Hence the Psalmist, after celebrating these works of the Most High, directs our attention to a superior source of illumination, adding, "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul." St. Paul congratulates Timothy upon his having known, from a child, the Holy Scriptures, which were able to make him, with faith in Christ, wise unto salvation. "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is

profitable for doctrine, for correction, for reproof, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto every good word and work." When I reflect on these passages, and others of the same import, I feel no difficulty in acceding to the declaration of Lord Francis Osborne, that a child might answer the ablest of our opponents, provided that child were a christian.

It is asserted that we have no reason to expect the conversion of foreign nations, in consequence of the sole perusal of the sacred volume; and, in support of this opinion, our adversaries urge a passage in the Epistle of St. Paul to the Romans:—"How shall they call on him on whom they have not believed; and how shall they believe on him of whom they have not heard; and how shall they hear without a preacher?" This inference appears to me to be founded upon an entire misconstruction of the passage: the apostle means to distinguish between the situation of those who are necessarily unacquainted with the character of the Saviour, and that of the persons to whom this information was conveyed; without intending to determine, or at least to lay any stress on, the precise mode of communication by which they obtained it. This is the more manifest from the extension of meaning in which the term *preach* is used by the same writer:—"For Moses," saith the same St. Paul, "hath in every city them that *preach* him, being *read* in the synagogue every sabbath-day." Such

is the want of candour on the part of our adversaries, and such the unworthy artifices by which they pervert the language of scripture from the simplicity and majesty of its meaning.

It might be naturally concluded, from this species of objection to the Bible Society, that our opponents were distinguished by a more than ordinary portion of zeal for the propagation of christianity in foreign parts, by the aid of missionaries: I sincerely wish the result of an attention to facts were such as would justify this inference. The friends of the Bible Society, it is well known, are the warmest supporters of foreign missions; and the holy flame by which they are animated expands in all directions, stimulating them at once to the most active exertions in the distribution of the Scriptures at home, and for the support of the ministry of the gospel in pagan countries. When we compare, with their conduct, the coldness and indifference of our adversaries to this object, we are compelled to perceive that the invidious preference they give to one mode of doing good, is not so much to be ascribed to their peculiar attachment to it, as to a desire of depreciating and depressing the importance of another.

Permit me to close these observations (for the length of which I ought already to apologize to the respectable audience I am addressing) with briefly noticing some of the indirect, though important advantages, likely to result from the establishment and progress of the Bible Society. The

direct benefit we contemplate, as the fruit of this institution, will undoubtedly be reaped by that innumerable multitude, among all nations, who, by means of it, will be furnished with an opportunity of perusing the sacred volume; but there are other collateral advantages, of the most important kind, which have already been experienced in part, and may be expected to accrue still more hereafter, from the admirable society of which this is an auxiliary branch. Among these, we cannot pass over its tendency to promote a good understanding among christians of different denominations. It pretends not, indeed, to cast any light on the questions which have unhappily divided the christian world; but, as far as the objects of it are concerned, it consigns them to oblivion;—it presents a common ground of cooperation, and a centre of union, without a sacrifice of principle, or the surrender of the smallest atom of the respective opinions and practices by which we are distinguished. Who, but the Author and Giver of all concord, could have put into the hearts of the children of men a design so beneficial and godlike, so adapted to allay the heats and animosities which have so often disturbed the peace of society, and disfigured our common christianity? It is like the "precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard: that went down to the skirts of his garments." It is, indeed, a most sacred perfume; and, while it is so abundantly poured out in the view of all nations,

I cannot but imagine I see it ascending in clouds of incense to heaven, grateful to God, to his saints, and to the holy angels, consecrating this happy soil, and drawing down upon it a copious shower of benedictions and blessings. How much unanimity strengthens, and discord enfeebles, the sinews of empire, is too obvious to need to be insisted on; nor was there ever a period in the history of Great Britain, when the former was more to be desired, or the latter more to be deprecated. The Bible Society is a solemn and public recognition, calculated, beyond any event that has yet transpired, to confound infidelity, and to expel from the nation the last relics of that detestable impiety, to shut up every crevice of the infernal pit, and disperse every atom of the pestilential stream. The sophistry of infidels had been successfully confuted by a succession of able writers; they have retired, baffled, from the field, their arrows spent, their ammunition exhausted; and nothing remained but to signalize the victory by a public monument, and to embody the national sentiment by erecting a public trophy out of the spoils of the enemy. This idea the Bible Society has nobly realized, by taking pledges from the statesmen, the senators, the nobles of the land, of their devoted attachment to the Word of God: they have publicly lifted up their voice, and declared, in the face of all Europe, that the Bible is the religion of Great Britain. What lustre does this shed upon our country: it appears the grand seminary of christian principle. Perhaps there is no single

moment, night or day, in which some voice does not rise up to heaven in its behalf; and prayer is the grand key that unlocks the celestial treasury.

It is not too much to hope that the attachment to the gospel, avowed by those who have cooperated in the measures of this society, will be followed by an increased attention on their part to explore its contents, to imbibe its spirit, and to regulate their lives by its precepts; and that thus the interests of vital christianity may keep pace with the more extensive promulgation of revealed truth. Let our activity in the cause be followed up by an increased spirit of attachment and investigation; let us earnestly desire to taste that bread of life which it is the property of this society to communicate: then shall we be a happy, because a holy people, and this will throw around us a greater splendour than Roman or Grecian genius could bestow. Should the sentiments of that divine book take possession of the heart, and mould the character of the inhabitants of this country, it would secure to the nation a higher protection than all its military and naval preparations; and even the rocks with which our isle is girt would, in comparison, be a feeble rampart against the assaults of our enemy. With perfect composure we leave the decision of this great controversy—and a greater never engaged the attention of mankind—to the arbitration of the Supreme Judge, without the smallest apprehension that we shall be called to an account—in that day when the earth and the works thereof shall be

burnt up, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat—for having unrolled too widely that volume which discloses to the eye of faith the realities and prospects of eternity. Nor will it be deemed presumption, if I affirm that, in a dying hour, when the interests and passions which now agitate us shall shrink to their due dimensions, it will afford us more satisfaction in the retrospect to have been the friends than the enemies of the Bible Society.

A SPEECH,

DELIVERED AT

THE GUILDHALL, LEICESTER,

On Tuesday, July 15, 1817,

AT THE SEVENTH ANNIVERSARY OF THE AUXILIARY BIBLE SOCIETY.

It has been usual, on these occasions, to eulogize the Bible Society; I will not say beyond its merits, for they are more than equal to the powers of the most exalted panegyric: but the frequency of these encomiums must be my apology for saying but little on that topic at present. The stores of rhetoric appear to me to be exhausted; while every department of nature and of art has been summoned and made to contribute its share to the illustration of the divine simplicity of its principle, the sanctity of its object, and the extent and grandeur of its operations. Never was there an institution, which at once went so far forward in the distribution of its benefits, and exerted such a reflex energy on its members and patrons; producing a generous enthusiasm, which kindles at every step, and is raised to a more intense degree by every fresh achievement.

I consider this society as a new moral power, which, combining the energies of Christendom in one great effort, promises to change the face of the universe; while, in imitation of Him in whose cause it is enlisted, it travels in the greatness of its strength, "mighty to save." It possesses every characteristic of the work of God, in which the simplest means are made to produce the greatest effects; where there is the utmost economy in the contrivance, and the greatest splendour and magnificence in the design. The imbecility of man appears in the littleness of his ends, which he accomplishes, for the most part, by complicated and laborious operations. Omnipotence, on the contrary, places opulence in the end, and parsimony in the means. While our pride is mortified by perceiving how little we can effect by the greatest efforts, the Almighty touches a secret spring, known only to himself, and impresses a single motion, which propagates itself in circles continually extending, till it reaches the extremity of the universe, and diffuses order and happiness through regions most remote from its origin, and most unconscious of its cause.

Of so similar a character is the Bible Society, and so analogous to the movements of divine power, that, it appears to me, it would be impious not to acknowledge the agency of the Spirit in its first conception, as much as the superintendence of Providence in its support. To fix upon a course of action, which gives

scope to every virtuous energy, while it stands perfectly aloof from the spirit of party,—which draws towards itself the best propensities of our common nature, and unites the pious of every nation and profession in one harmonious family,—is not the work of a mortal; it bespeaks the finger of God. Its direct benefits are too obvious to escape the most careless observation: but the indirect influence it exerts, in harmonizing the spirits, and conciliating the affections of such as had long been alienated from each other, is so remarkable, as to make it doubtful, whether its instruments or its objects,—whether those who share, or those who dispense its munificence,—are the greatest gainers.

The utility of this admirable institution, however, has been called in question, its constitution censured, and its operations arraigned. To give the Bible to all classes and descriptions, without note or comment, is represented by some as a dangerous experiment, adapted to perplex and mislead uncultivated minds. Excellent as the Scriptures are allowed to be, some preparation, it is asserted, is necessary, ere they are communicated in their full extent; and that the best use that can be immediately made of them, is to compose and distribute such selections and abridgments as seem best calculated for popular instruction.

That some portions of the sacred volume are of more universal interest than others; that the

New Testament, for example, has a more immediate relation to our prospects and to our duties, than the Old, is freely conceded: just as one star differs from another star in glory, though they are all placed in the same firmament, and are the work of the same hand. But to this restrictive system, this jealous policy, which would exclude a part of the word of God from universal inspection and perusal, we feel insuperable objections; nor are we disposed to ascribe to any description of men whatever, that control over divine communications which such a measure implies. We are persuaded that no man possesses a right to curtail the gifts of God, or to deal out with a sparing hand what was intended for universal patrimony. If the manner in which revelation was imparted be such as makes it manifest that it was originally designed for the benefit of all, we are at a loss to conceive how any man can have a right, by his interference, to render it inaccessible.

The question, whether the Bible was designed to be communicated to mankind at large without distinction, or to a particular class, with a discretionary power of communicating it at such times and in such proportions as they might deem fit, can only be determined by itself. If it bear decisive indications of its being intended for private custody,—if it be found to affirm, or even to insinuate, that it is not meant for universal circulation,—we must submit to hold it at the discretion of its

legitimate guardians, and to accept, with becoming gratitude, such portions as they are pleased to bestow. From the word of God there can be no appeal: it must decide its own character, and determine its own pretensions. Thus much we must be allowed to assume; that, if it was originally given to mankind indiscriminately, no power upon earth is entitled to restrict it; because, on the supposition which we are now making, since every man's original right in it was equal, that right can be cancelled by no authority but that which bestowed it. If it was at first promulgated under the character of a universal standard of faith and practice, we are bound to recognize it in that character; and every attempt to alter it, to convert into private what was originally public property, or to make a monopoly of a universal grant, is an act of extreme presumption and impiety. It is to assume a superiority over revelation itself.

Let us see, then, how the matter stands. Let us ascend to its original, and examine in what shape it was first communicated.

Though we are accustomed to speak of the Bible as *one* book, it is, in truth, a collection of many, composed at different periods and by different writers, as holy men of God were moved by the Holy Ghost.

To speak first of the Old Testament. The Old Testament was distributed by the Jews into three parts:—the Pentateuch; the earlier and later Prophets, including some historical compositions; and

the Hagiographs, or Holy Writings, consisting chiefly of the Book of Job, the Proverbs, and the Psalms.

With respect to the Pentateuch, it is a matter of notoriety that it was delivered with the utmost publicity, and was neither more nor less than the public and municipal law of the Jewish commonwealth, which every king, on his ascending the throne, was commanded to copy with his own hand, as the perpetual rule of his government; and every head of a family, to teach and inculcate on his children, when he sat in his house, and when he walked by the way. It was first proclaimed from the top of Mount Sinai, with ineffable splendour, in the hearing of the whole nation, prefaced with the remarkable words, "Hear, O Israel." There is surely no pretence for representing it as a deposit committed to a particular class, when an accurate acquaintance with it was requisite, in order to regulate the private, as well as public life, of every Israelite. Though, in process of time, its interpretation gave birth to a particular profession, whose followers are styled scribes in the New Testament, nothing was further from their thoughts than the assumption of a right to withhold it from public perusal: their employment was, partly, by an accurate transcription, to preserve the purity of the copies, and, partly, to elucidate its obscurities.

If we descend to the Prophets, we shall find them addressing their instructions, and announcing their predictions, in the most public manner, to all

descriptions of persons—to princes, to nobles, to the populace, in crowded assemblies, in places of the most public resort. Such was the manner in which Jeremiah prophesied:—"I am full," saith he, "of the fury of the Lord; I am weary with holding in; I will pour it out upon the children abroad, and upon the assembly of young men together." (Jer. vi. 11.) When strong political reasons seemed to dictate a different proceeding, when he was violently importuned by his sovereign to conceal his predictions, lest he should weaken the hands of the people, and encourage their enemies, he remained inflexible, and continued to divulge the suggestions of inspiration with the same publicity as before. Yet, it is the prophetic part of scripture which is the most obscure, and most liable to be perverted to the purposes of popular delusion.

Of the Hagiographs little need be said. As they consist chiefly of maxims of civil prudence, sentiments of devotion, and sublime descriptions of the Deity and his works, it is probable none will contend for their restricted circulation.

Let us take a rapid glance at the New Testament. Here the Gospels will claim our first attention: and, with respect to these, if we are to credit the earliest ecclesiastical writers, they are a mere abstract of the preaching of the respective apostles and evangelists whose names they bear. We are informed that, when they were about to leave certain countries, where they had been employed for a considerable time in disseminating the gospel,

the inhabitants of those districts were anxious to possess a permanent record of the principal facts in which they had been instructed, that, by reading them at their leisure, they might, in the absence of their teachers, impress them on their memory. The Gospels of Mark and Luke are affirmed, by the earliest historians, to have been composed from the preaching of St. Peter and St. Paul, and not to have been published until they had received the entire approbation of those apostles. This part of scripture, then, supplies no pretence or apology for the practice of restricted distribution.

The Epistles come next in order: and these, as is evident from their inscriptions, were addressed to whole assemblies of the faithful; in which, rich and poor, learned and unlearned, Jew and Gentile, were incorporated on terms of religious equality. They were also read publicly, every Lord's-day; in the devotional exercises of which, the recitation of the Scriptures, after the manner of the ancient synagogue, occupied a conspicuous place. We find St. Paul strongly adjuring one of the societies to which he wrote, to take care that his epistle was read to "all the holy brethren."

There is one extraordinary book, of a character totally distinct from the rest, which closes the canon of inspiration. The book to which I refer, you are aware, is the Revelation of St. John;—a composition distinguished, above all others, by a profusion of obscure, figurative diction; delineating, by a sort of hieroglyphics, the principal revolutions

destined to befall the christian church, from the earliest times till the consummation of all things. This portion of scripture is a fertile mine of erroneous, extravagant conjecture, and supplies, by its injudicious interpretation, more gratification to a heated imagination, to a taste for the marvellous and incredible, than the whole of the New Testament beside; insomuch, that few have been found capable of preserving a perfect sobriety and composure in the midst of its stupendous scenery, where the curtain rises and falls so often, where new creations so rapidly succeed each other, accompanied by myriads of the angelic order, and the sound of trumpets, and of voices, and thunderings, and lightnings. Yet it is sufficiently remarkable, that this is the only book, to the perusal of which an express benediction is attached: "Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy." Its integrity is also guarded and secured by a fearful measure denounced against such as shall presume to alter it in the minutest tittle, by adding to, or taking away from its words. The Holy Spirit, foreseeing what actually ensued, that the peculiar features of this prophecy would excite the prejudices of some, and in others its obscurity induce neglect, judged it necessary thus to employ a special precaution against its falling into contempt or oblivion.

Thus it appears, from a rapid induction of particulars, that the Bible is a common property, over which there is no human control; that, as "all

scripture is given by inspiration of God," so it is all "profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished for every good word and work."

In addition to what has been said, it is also proper to remark, that translations of the sacred book were early made, for the benefit of the unlearned, in the vernacular language of the countries into which christianity had spread; that various versions in the Latin were published in the West, and the Syriac in the East, either during the lives of the apostles, or in the period immediately succeeding: nor was it ever made a question, during the first centuries, whether the inspired writings should be laid open to universal inspection. The christian fathers were well known to have inculcated their perusal on all sorts of men; nor are the most celebrated of them, St. Austin and St. Chrysostom, ever more eloquent than when engaged in unfolding their excellence, and expatiating on their utility, to persons of every description.

It was not till "the man of sin" had placed himself in the temple of God, and exalted himself "above all that is called God, and that is worshipped," that a different policy prevailed, and the people were told that they must be content to derive their religious information only through the medium of priests.

Is it possible to conceive a greater insult? If we should resent the attempt to disturb an ancient

possession, and to remove the landmarks which bound and ascertain the inheritance of our fathers, what ought we to feel when a scheme is set on foot to deprive us of the record of our salvation, of the charter of our immortality? Who are they who pretend a right to sit in judgment on the contents of revelation,—to determine what is proper to be communicated, and what withheld, as though they were sifting the chaff from the wheat? Is it come to this, that the medicine of life is to be dealt out with a sparing and cautious hand, and mixed with foreign ingredients, like arsenic or hemlock, which are only safe when administered in a diluted form, and in small quantities? What is it which has lifted these pretenders to such an envied superiority over their fellow-creatures, while the whole species, sick and infirm, are consigned to the skill of the same great Physician, and are either in a state of spiritual death, or under one and the same process of cure?

Apprehensive as I am of exhausting your patience, there are yet two considerations to which I would direct your attention, sufficient to demonstrate the importance of not relinquishing that right with which God and nature have invested you.

First, The great mass of mankind have no possible motives to tempt them to pervert the dictates of inspiration. The Bible is safest in the custody of those who have no temptation to abuse it, by forcing upon it a language foreign from its original

intention. Such is the precise situation of the great body of the people. Their concern in religion is of the purest and most unsuspicious nature, since the only advantage which it is conceivable they can derive from it, is assistance towards holy living and dying. If it fail to put them in possession of a share in the common salvation, there is no subordinate end to be answered, no private emolument attainable by its means, to compensate for their loss. If it be ineffectual to enlighten and to save them, there is no other benefit which they can flatter themselves with the hope of deriving from it. You, in this assembly, who sustain no clerical character, possess this advantage, at least, over the ministers of religion, that you have no temptations to make a gain of godliness. Your religion either promotes your eternal welfare, or it is nothing to you. How far this is from being the case with the Romish hierarchy, through all its ranks and gradations, from his holiness to the meanest ecclesiastic, few of you need to be informed. The loftiest pretensions to universal empire, the prostration of Christendom at their feet, a plenary power of absolution, of opening the gates of purgatory and of paradise;—this gigantic dominion, extending to the living and the dead, founds itself entirely on a perverted interpretation of the Scriptures: and, were they laid open to the people in their true intent and meaning, the whole fabric would melt and disappear like a cloud. When we remember this, we cease to be surprised at the

extreme animosity which his holiness has evinced to the free circulation of the Scriptures. Their circulation is the sure presage of his destruction; and the roar of his bull (if I may be allowed a pun on so serious a subject) is but the instinctive cry of a beast which feels itself goaded to madness by the operations of the Bible Society. To commit the custody of the Bible to men who have so deep and vital an interest in its suppression, would be to commit the lamb to the care of the wolf. No, my countrymen! the situation of his holiness possesses nothing in common with ours; and our feelings accord to our situations. He calls for darkness, (and well he may,) to prevent the detection of his errors; we, for light, to conduct us in the pursuit of truth. He courts the shade, to conceal his enormities; we ask for illumination, to enable us to perform our duties. The book which we are employed in circulating, sufficiently solves the problem:—"He that doeth evil, hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved: he that doeth truth, cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest that they are wrought in God." When the Romish church found she had deviated too far from the religion of the New Testament, to render a reconciliation practicable, she proceeded to take away the key of knowledge, by opposing every possible obstacle to its progress; and, having availed herself of the ignorance of the age, and the apathy of the people, to establish her claim to infallibility, she

became a standard to herself. Thus she rendered detection impossible; nor did she ever feel herself safe till the stage was completely darkened, till every chink and crevice was closed, through which a ray could penetrate. Thus was the reign of superstition established: but, were we to attempt a recital of a thousandth part of the fearful impieties she was guilty of, and the bloody tragedies she acted in the dark,—her impostures, oppressions, cruelties, and murders,—we should detain you till midnight, and leave the tale half told. Suffice it to observe, that this mystery of iniquity was founded on a prevailing ignorance of the Scriptures, and was completed by reducing them to a monopoly.

Secondly, The next remark to which I would request your attention is, that heresies have seldom or never taken their rise from the mass of the people. Look at the history, trace the origin, of the principal corruptions of christianity which have prevailed at different periods; and you will uniformly find, that they commenced in the higher classes, among men of leisure and speculation; that they were the product of perverted ingenuity and of unsanctified talent. Adapted to subserve the purposes of avarice and ambition, they were the invention of spiritual wickedness in high places. The commonalty, tenacious of the habits of thinking and acting to which they have been trained, are slow in adopting novelties, and the last to be misled by the illusions of hypothesis, or the false refinements of theory. The progress of opinion is

from the higher to the lower orders; and it is as unnatural for it to begin at the bottom, as for water to ascend from the valleys to the hills. The doctrine of transubstantiation is too much at war with common sense to have originated with the common people, any more than the doctrines of purgatory, auricular confession, the worship of the host, or the infallibility of the pope; all of which were gradually obtruded on the laity by the artifices of a designing priesthood, whose interest and ambition they promoted. Far from running into these absurdities of their own accord, the people, harassed, confounded, and dismayed, were hunted into the toils by men who made merchandize of souls. Let but the great body of the people be enlightened by the word of God, let them comprehend its truths, and imbibe its maxims, and they will form the firmest bulwarks against the encroachments of popery, as well as every other erroneous and delusive system. It is in a virtuous and an enlightened population, and especially in a yeomanry and peasantry informed and actuated by the true spirit of religion, we look for the security and preservation of its best interests. It was among them that Christianity commenced its earliest triumphs; among them the reformation begun by Luther found its first and fastest friends: and, as it was in this department of society our holy religion first penetrated, should the time arise for its disappearance in other quarters, it is here that it will find its last and safe retreat.

An ingenious allusion was made, in your Report, to catholic emancipation—a subject on which the public mind is much divided. To agitate the question of the expediency of that measure, on the present occasion, would be highly improper; but I may be permitted to remark, that, however our sentiments may vary on the subject of emancipation, considered in a political light, we are unanimous in desiring to bestow that moral emancipation which is of infinitely greater value, and which will best ensure the wise improvement of the liberty catholics possess, as well as of the power they aspire to. We are most solicitous to emancipate them from that intolerable yoke of superstition and priestcraft, under which reason is crippled and made dwarfish, conscience is oppressed, and religion expires. We are perfectly convinced, that nothing will so essentially contribute to raise our fellow-subjects in Ireland to their just, intellectual, and moral elevation, as the wide and unimpeded circulation of the sacred Scriptures.

Let us, then, proceed with unabated ardour in this glorious career. Let us endeavour to give as wide an extension as possible to the waters of life. Let them flow freely, in opposition to the narrow and mischievous policy which would confine them in artificial pools and reservoirs, where they become stagnant and putrid. Let us join our prayers with our efforts, that the word of God may have "free course and be glorified," whatever opposing force it may sweep away in its progress:

and should his holiness the pope, while he is buffeting with the waves, and attempting to arrest the current, be thrown down, and his triple crown totter and tumble from his head; instead of feeling the smallest concern, let us rejoice and exult in the sure presage it will afford of the speedy arrival of that long-looked-for moment, when, at the decree of the Eternal, at the oath of the archangel, Babylon the Great shall sink like lead in the mighty waters.

FRAGMENT.

SPEECH

DELIVERED AT A MEETING OF THE LEICESTER AUXILIARY BIBLE SOCIETY.

[NOT PUBLISHED BEFORE.]

IF the Scriptures are in reality what they profess to be, we can be at no loss to perceive the obligation we are under to make them as extensively known as possible. On this subject we must allow them to speak for themselves; they assert their claim to be received as an immediate revelation from God, an inspired guide in the conduct of life, and in the pursuit of immortality, "a light shining in a dark place" to direct us in the paths of salvation. They affirm themselves to be the voice of God addressing his creatures on a subject of the last importance. Whether their claim to this character is valid or not, is a question to be discussed with infidels, not among christians, and is therefore to be put out of view in discussing the merits of this society. It is a christian institution, set on foot by professed christians in a christian land. It is strange that, among men professing christianity, a doubt should arise for a moment on the propriety

of circulating as widely as possible the records of our common faith, the charter of the common salvation.

But we are not agreed among ourselves on various articles of belief, on the diverse modes of discipline and of worship. True; nor do we profess such agreement: but that the Scriptures are the standard to which we must all appeal, that they contain the infallible rule of the faith and practice of christians, we are agreed; and what possible objection, then, can a diversity of opinions on other subjects create to the universal distribution of the oracles of God? Are your peculiar views, we would ask the objector, sanctioned, in your apprehension, by these oracles?—then, instead of acting an hostile part, we are your allies;—for we are circulating the very book on which your views are founded; we are diffusing that light, [and] that only, by which you profess to have been conducted to the conclusions at which you have arrived. What greater advantage could you wish for the propagation of your doctrines, than that mankind should have free and [universal] access to the sources of your own conviction? It must be assumed for granted that in consequence of faithfully consulting its dictates you have been guided aright. Why anticipate, in regard to others, an opposite result? why suppose it will bewilder them in the paths of error and heresy, when your own experience attests it has led you into those of rectitude and truth? Is it agreeable to reason to expect

that the same tree shall bring forth good fruit and evil fruit; or that the same fountain will send forth sweet water and bitter?

In the midst of that unhappy diversity of sentiment which divides professing christians, what can be conceived more unexceptionably proper than the circulation of that book, in the belief of whose inspiration we all concur, and may therefore act in perfect concert and harmony, without the smallest sacrifice of principle? If our professions are sincere, we are, in such a course of proceeding, at once promoting our respective views, our discriminating tenets, and exhibiting an edifying example of unanimity and concord, combining in one and the same effort the interests of charity and of truth.

We are aware that destructive errors may be, and have been, deduced from an erroneous interpretation of the Bible; there is nothing so absurd and extravagant, in the defence of which it has not been quoted; but, as this is far from implying any reflection on that sacred book, so it has uniformly arisen from partial and defective views of its contents, where single passages have been violently torn from their connexion, and made to speak a language most remote from the scope and design of the writer. The proper antidote to this evil is [a] diligent and serious perusal of the whole; which will seldom fail, to all practical purposes, to ascertain that which is ambiguous, to elucidate what is obscure, and explain what is figurative and metaphorical. From a full conviction that a

comprehensive view of the Scriptures is the most effectual corrective of the mistakes into which we may be betrayed by the cursory perusal of detached portions, it is the invariable plan of this society [to] distribute the whole of the Scriptures: nor can we sufficiently admire the inconsistency of those who, deprecating the danger of this, propose a partial distribution of the sacred volume, when it is obvious that the most alarming deviations from truth have arisen from this very cause, an exclusive attention to particular parts, without adverting to the relations they bear to the whole, and the reciprocal light which one portion of Revelation derives from the other. If "all scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness," we are at a loss to conceive how any part can have an opposite tendency, or how the withholding a portion of the instruction it affords can be productive of more illumination than giving it in all its extent. "The foolishness of God is wiser than man," and the conduct of his providence in putting his revelation into our hands, without the smallest limitation or restriction, affords a presumption, or rather a proof, of its tendency to good and good only; [while, of the contrary,] it is difficult to conceive the possibility without contradicting the decisions of infinite wisdom. If a part only would have been more beneficial than the whole, only a part would have been given; or if the benefit to be derived from the whole is

restricted to some privileged class or order, without extending to mankind at large, we should undoubtedly have been furnished with some intimation of this, some mark or criterion by which to distinguish those favoured individuals who are allowed access to the whole counsel of God. We certainly are at a loss to discern, in the adversaries of this institution, that transcendent piety, that lofty superiority to worldly passions, or that resplendent exhibition of the christian character, which might induce a suspicion of their being, in some peculiar manner, the confidential depositaries of the divine secrets. Whatever pretensions of this sort they may really possess, we can only lament that extreme modesty and reserve which has so effectually concealed [them] from the public view.

Gentlemen, on casting a survey over the different orders into which society is distributed, I am at an utter loss to fix on any description of persons, who are likely to be injured by the most extensive perusal of the word of God. The poor, we may be certain, will sustain no injury from their attention to a book, which, while [it] inculcates, under the most awful sanctions, the practice of honesty, industry, frugality, subordination to lawful authority, contentment, and resignation to the allotments of Providence, elevates them to the hope of "an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away;" a book, which at once secures the observance of the duties which attach to an inferior condition, and almost annihilates its evils, by

opening their prospects into a state, where all the inequalities of fortune will vanish, and the obscurest and most neglected piety shall be crowned with eternal glory. "The poor man rejoices that he is exalted;" and, while he views himself as the member of Christ, and the heir of a blessed immortality, he can look with undissembled pity on the frivolous distinctions, the fruitless agitations, and the fugitive enjoyments of the most eminent and the most prosperous of those who have their portion in this world. The poor man will sustain no injury, by exchanging the vexations of envy for the quiet of a good conscience, and fruitless repinings for the consolations of religious hope. The less is his portion in this life, the more ardently will he cherish and embrace the promise of a better, while the hope of that better exerts a reciprocal influence, in prompting him to discharge the duties, and reconciling him to the evils, which are inseparable from the present. The Bible is the treasure of the poor, the solace of the sick, and the support of the dying; and, while other books may amuse and instruct in a leisure hour, it is the peculiar triumph of that book to create light in the midst of darkness, to alleviate the sorrow which admits of no other alleviation, to direct a beam of hope to the heart which no [other] topic of consolation can reach; while guilt, despair, and death, vanish at the touch of its holy inspiration. There is something in the spirit and diction of the Bible, which is found peculiarly adapted to arrest the attention of

the plainest and most uncultivated minds. The simple structure of its sentences, combined with a lofty spirit of poetry,—its familiar allusions to the scenes of nature, and the transactions of common life,—the delightful intermixture of narration with the doctrinal and preceptive parts,—and the profusion of miraculous facts, which convert it into a sort of enchanted ground,—its constant advertence to the Deity, whose perfections it renders almost visible and palpable,—unite in bestowing upon it an interest which attaches to no other performance, and which, after assiduous and repeated perusal, invests it with much of the charm of novelty: like the great orb of day, at which we are wont to gaze with unabated astonishment from infancy to old age. What other book besides the Bible could be heard in public assemblies from year to year, with an attention that never tires, and an interest that never cloys? With few exceptions, let a portion of the sacred volume be recited in a mixed multitude, and though it has been heard a thousand times, a universal stillness ensues, every eye is fixed, and every ear is awake and attentive. Select, if you can, any other composition, and let it be rendered equally familiar to the mind, and see whether it will produce this effect.

The importance of attaching a distinct sanction to the rules of moral conduct is immediately obvious; and, whatever eloquence may be employed in painting the beauty of virtue, and the odious deformity of vice, will have little influence

in the moment of temptation, and in the conflicts of passion, upon the most cultivated minds, and on those of an inferior description, none at all. These topics appeal to feelings which are feeble and evanescent, while the passions to which they are opposed are violent and intense. Nothing short of a "Thus saith the Lord," accompanied and enforced with the prospect of eternal happiness or misery, will be sufficient to secure the practice of what is right, when vice and crime are recommended by the allurements of pleasure, or the promise of immediate advantage. But it is the word of God only to which the sanction of his authority is attached, and which incessantly reminds us, that the lessons which it teaches are not merely the dictates of reason, but the voice of God. In human instructions, however excellent, there must of necessity be a separation; the instruction is [in] one place, the sanction in another: in the Scriptures, and in the Scriptures alone, they are combined and incorporated. Here, it is not a man addressing his exhortations to a fellow-creature; it is the Father of our spirits, the Judge of the universe, speaking from heaven, and grappling with the conscience of the moral and accountable being which he has formed. Let this persuasion be really and deeply felt, and the word of the Lord is "quick and powerful, sharper than a two-edged sword." There is no room for evasion, no pretext for [inattention], and no possibility of escape, except [by] immediate compliance and submission.

ADDRESS

IN BEHALF OF THE

BAPTIST ACADEMICAL INSTITUTION

AT STEPNEY.

[WRITTEN IN 1811 OR 1812.]

IN calling the attention of the public to a new seminary, intended to be established near London, for the education of candidates for the christian ministry, we are desirous of presenting a short account of the motives by which we are actuated, and the objects we have in view.

We beg leave to premise, that nothing is farther from our intention than to interfere with the respectable seminaries already subsisting, from which the church of Christ has derived essential benefit. We congratulate the public on their institution, rejoice in their prosperity, and feel a cordial concurrence with the views of their generous patrons and supporters. We are persuaded, however, that the ground is not yet so fully occupied as to leave no room for a farther extension of the means of instruction to students in theology; and that, among the churches of the Baptist denomination, at least, a difficulty is frequently

experienced in procuring young men possessed of those qualifications which the state of society renders desirable. Having been supplied by the noble munificence of a worthy individual, with a house and premises at Stepney, well fitted for an academy, we are desirous of realizing the liberal intentions of the donor, by carrying into execution the plan of public utility he has meditated.

At this period, no apology can be necessary for attempting to assist young men, designed for the ministry, in the acquisition of such branches of knowledge as may qualify them more completely for the successful discharge of that sacred function: since, whatever prejudices unfavourable to learning may have formerly prevailed in serious minds, they appear to have subsided, and christians in general admit the propriety of enlisting literature in the service of religion. From the recent multiplication of theological seminaries among protestant dissenters, such an inference may be fairly deduced. While we assert the absolute sufficiency of the Scriptures for every saving purpose, it is impossible to deny the usefulness of the knowledge derived from books, in unfolding many of its obscurities, explaining many of its allusions, and producing more fully to the view the inestimable treasure it contains. The primary truths of revelation, it is acknowledged, offer themselves at first view in the sacred volume; but there are latent riches and gems of inestimable value, which can be brought to light only by a deeper

and more laborious research. There are numberless exquisite harmonies and retired beauties in the scheme of revelation, which are rarely discovered without the union of great industry with cultivated talent. A collection of writings, composed on various occasions, and at remote intervals of time, including detached portions of history the most ancient, and of poetry awfully sublime, but often obscure,—a book containing continual allusions to manners unknown in this part of the world, and to institutions which have long ceased to exist,—must demand all the aid that ingenuity and learning can bring towards its elucidation.

The light of revelation, it should be remembered, is not opposite to the light of reason; the former presupposes the latter; they are both emanations from the same source; and the discoveries of the Bible, however supernatural, are addressed to the understanding, the only medium of information whether human or divine. Revealed religion is not a cloud which overshadows reason; it is a superior illumination designed to perfect its exercise, and supply its deficiencies. Since truth is always consistent with itself, it can never suffer from the most enlarged exertion of the intellectual powers, provided those powers be regulated by a spirit of dutiful submission to the oracles of God. The evidences of christianity challenge the most rigid examination; the more accurate and extensive the inquiry, the more convincing will they appear. Unexpected coincidences between

inspired history and the most undisputed remains of antiquity will present themselves, and striking analogies be perceived between the course of providence and the supreme economy of grace. The gradual developement of the plan of revelation, together with the dependence of its several parts on each other, and the perfect consistency of the whole, will employ and reward the deepest investigation. In proof of the assistance rèligion may derive from learning, rightly directed, we appeal to the writings of an Usher, a Newton, and a Bryant; to the ancient apologists of christianity, who, by means of it, unmasked the deformities of polytheism; to the reformers, whom it taught to remove the sacred volume from the dust and obscurity of cloisters, and exhibit it in the dialects of Europe; and to the victorious impugners of infidelity in modern times. Such are the spoils which sanctified learning has won from superstition and impiety, the common enemies of God and man. Nor must we forget to notice, among the most precious fruits of cultivated reason, *that* consciousness of its own deficiencies, and sense of its own weakness, which prompts it to bow to the authority of revelation, and depose its honours at the cross; since its incapacity to solve the most important questions, and to satisfy the most distressing doubts, will be felt with the truest conviction, and attested with the best grace, by such as have made the largest essay of its powers.

An unconverted ministry we look upon as the greatest calamity that can befall the church; nor would we be supposed to insinuate, by the preceding observations, that education can ever be a proper substitute for native talent, much less for real piety: what we mean to assert is, that the union of all will much enlarge the capacity of doing good. Without descending to particulars, we must be allowed to remark, for example, that the art of arranging ideas in their proper order, and of investigating the nature of different sorts of evidence, as well as an acquaintance with the fundamental rules of composition and rhetoric, are of essential service to a public speaker.

The existing state of society supplies additional reasons for extending the advantages of academical education. If former periods have given birth to more renowned scholars, none ever produced so many men of reading and reflection as the present; never was there a time when books were so multiplied, knowledge so diffused,—and when, consequently, the exercise of cultivated talents in all departments was in such demand. When the general level of mental improvements is so much raised, it becomes necessary for the teachers of religion to possess their full share of these advantages, if they would secure from neglect the exercise of a function, the most important to the interests of mankind. If, in the days of inspiration, there were schools of the prophets, and miraculous infusions of wisdom did not supersede human

means of instruction, much less are they to be neglected in the present times, when no such communications are expected. To this we must add, that perverted literature is one of the most powerful weapons in the hands of the enemies of divine truth, who leave no effort untried to recommend their cause by the lustre of superior acquisitions, and to form in the public mind the dangerous association between irreligion and talents, weakness and piety.

In insisting so strongly on the advantages of a regular education, we mean no disrespect to those excellent persons who have exercised their ministry, much to the benefit of the church, without those advantages; many of whom are men of vigorous minds, who have surmounted great obstacles in the pursuit of knowledge; and others, by their piety and good sense, well fitted for the stations which they occupy. We trust that such ministers will always be highly esteemed in our churches: there are situations, it is probable, which they are better qualified to fill than persons of a higher education. To the improvement of the higher classes, however, it will scarcely be denied, men of the latter character are best suited; and, as their salvation is not in itself less important than that of the lower orders, so their superior weight in society attaches to their character and conduct peculiar consideration. It is also manifest, from the examples of a Brainerd, an Elliot, and a Schwartz, that where piety in a candidate for

the ministry is once secured, a course of academical studies is no impediment to the growth and developement of qualities the most conducive to success,—deep humility, eminent spirituality, unshaken perseverance, and patient self-denial.

With respect to the principles we wish to see prevail in our future seminary, it may be sufficient to observe, they are in general the principles of the reformation; and, were we to descend to a more minute specification, we should add, they are the principles which distinguish the body of christians denominated Particular or Calvinistic Baptists. While we feel a cordial esteem for all who love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity; disclaiming all pretensions to that vaunted liberality which masks an indifference to revealed truth, we feel no hesitation in declaring, that nothing would give us more concern than to see the seminary we have in contemplation become the organ of infidel or heretical pravity.

We conceive some advantages may accrue from fixing the proposed seminary in the vicinity of the metropolis. It may be hoped that its pecuniary resources will be benefited by being placed in the centre of commercial opulence; that a residence of a few years near the capital of a great empire may give an expansion to the youthful mind; and that the means which it affords of obtaining the assistance of teachers in various departments of science, no where else to be found, may improve the taste, and direct the exertions of the students.

We conclude, with recommending our undertaking to the patronage of the public, and to the blessing of God, and with expressing our hope, that, through the influence of the Divine Spirit, in a copious effusion on the future patrons, tutors, and students of this seminary, however small in its beginning, it will become respectable for learning and piety, be a nursery of faithful and able ministers, and a blessing to the church of Christ.

LETTER

TO THE COMMITTEE OF

THE BAPTIST MISSIONARY SOCIETY.

To the Committee of the Baptist Missionary Society, convened in London, on the 15th Instant.

Bristol, March 12, 1827.

GENTLEMEN,

It is with much diffidence that I presume to address you on the present occasion, nor am I certain whether I am perfectly in order in so doing; but, conceiving this to be a crisis in the mission, and not being able to be present at the meeting, I could not satisfy myself without communicating the result of my reflections on the important business which has called you together.

Dr. Marshman, it seems, as the representative of the brethren at Serampore, has instituted a demand of one-sixth of all the money collected or subscribed towards the society, to be paid annually in aid of the missionary operations going on there. It must strike every one as strange, that this demand should almost immediately follow a preceding one which was acceded to, which he

then professed to consider as perfectly satisfactory, and as putting a final termination to all dispute or discussion on the subject of pecuniary claims—that, notwithstanding this, he should now bring forward a fresh requisition of one-sixth of the same amount, accompanied, as I am informed, by an intimation, that it is possible this may not be his ultimatum. This proceeding has all the appearance of a tentative process, designed to ascertain how far our anxiety to avoid a breach will prompt us to submit to his encroachments. What security have we against future requisitions if we yield to the present? What reason to suppose our ready compliance in this instance will not encourage him to embrace an early opportunity of making further demands? It has all the appearance of the commencement of a series of unfounded pretensions and endless exactions.

That a set of men, in the character of missionaries, after disclaiming the authority of the society which sent them out, and asserting an entire independence—after claiming an absolute control (whether rightfully or not) over a large property which that society had always considered as its own, should demand an annual payment from those from whom they had severed themselves, and thus attempt to make their constituents their tributaries, is a proceeding scarcely paralleled in the history of human affairs.

I am utterly at a loss to understand on what principles the Serampore brethren, in the position

in which they have placed themselves, have any claim whatever on the funds of the society whose authority they have renounced, after appropriating to themselves the management of an extensive revenue, in the disposal of which they will not brook the smallest interference or control. Without reverting to former grounds of controversy, it will surely be admitted that the independence we have, for the sake of peace, conceded to them, is reciprocal—that our right to it is not less than theirs—and that we are consequently at liberty to dispose of our income in the way which we conceive most conducive to the purposes of our institution.

It may be very proper, under certain circumstances, for us to aid the brethren at Serampore by occasional donations, regulated by the state of our funds, and the attention necessary to other objects; but this is essentially different from absolutely engaging to pay an annual sum, which would, in my humble opinion, be equally inconsistent with the interests and the honour of this society. As our brethren of Serampore have chiefly exerted themselves in translations, and are confessedly in possession of great pecuniary resources, there seems no imperious necessity for regularly diverting those funds to their aid, which are unequal to the demand which Bengal alone would create, were our mission (a most desirable event) concentrated within that province. Calcutta, to say nothing of other stations, cries aloud for more labourers, but cries in vain.

It has been said that we are indebted for our success to the celebrity attached to the names of Carey, Marshman, and Ward; and that but for the unbounded confidence of the religious public in these men, our funds would never have been realized. Supposing this to be the case, to take advantage of such a circumstance in order to bring the society into subjection, would not be to make a very generous use of their influence. But I believe it is a mistake; it is my firm conviction that the baptist mission, like other kindred institutions, rests on the basis of its own merits, and that it will not fail to secure the confidence of the public, in proportion to the purity of its motives, the wisdom of its counsels, and the utility of its objects. If it cannot sustain the ordeal of public opinion on these principles, let it sink, rather than owe its support to the illusion of a name.

To contemplate the possibility of being compelled to an open rupture with our brethren of Serampore is unquestionably painful; it is their knowledge alone of our extreme reluctance to hazard that consequence which imboldens them to advance these exorbitant claims. If we can avoid it by a consistent and dignified mode of procedure, let it be avoided; but if peace can only be purchased by an ignominious surrender of our rights as a society,—by a tame submission to unreasonable demands,—and by subjecting it to a sort of feudal dependence, in all time to

come, on persons we know not whom, whose character we cannot ascertain, and whose actions we cannot control,—the purchase is, in my humble opinion, too dear. The treatment of the Serampore brethren has not been such that we need shrink from its most ample exposure to the public; nor have we any other censure to fear on that head, except it be for lavishing upon them a too overweening confidence. We have no such secrets to conceal, that it should cost us a large annual payment to secure their suppression.

Of the three brethren, with whom we were lately in treaty, one is already gone into eternity, and the remaining two are advancing to that period of life which ought to make us pause ere we enter into engagements, which will give to persons of whom we know little or nothing a permanent right of interference with our funds.

The crisis is most solemn; and a hasty compliance with the present requisition may, when it is too late, make matter for bitter and unavailing repentance. That you may be indulged on this, and on every other occasion, with "the wisdom which is from above," is the sincere prayer of,

Gentlemen,

Your obedient humble Servant,

ROBERT HALL.*

* This letter, having been published before, could not with propriety be withheld: it was inserted without consulting Mr. Foster. For the remarks from that gentleman occasioned by this inadvertence, see vol. vi. at the end of his "Observations."—ED.

PREFACE

TO

HALL'S HELP TO ZION'S TRAVELLERS.

[WRITTEN IN 1814.]

An aversion to religious controversy may arise from one of two causes, in their nature the most opposite,—a contempt of religion itself, or a high degree of devotional feeling. They who consider the objects of religion as visionary and uncertain, or who, rejecting revelation, feel their inability to find a place where they may fix their footing, will naturally feel an emotion of contempt for theological contests, similar to that which we should experience towards men who were fighting for possessions in the air.

There are not a few who would engage with the utmost seriousness and ardour in a dispute on the nature and effects of paper currency, who would be ashamed of being suspected of directing their attention for a moment to the most weighty question in theology. Attentive to all the aspects and combinations of the material and of the political world, they are accustomed to regard religion as a sort of Utopia, a land of shadow and of fiction, where, wrapt in pleasing vision, credulity reposes

on the lap of imposture. Persons of this sort are so completely overcome by the enchantments of the present state, so entirely devoted to the wisdom which St. James denominates earthly and sensual, that they are incapable of being impressed with a conviction of the possibility of a higher order of objects, or a more elevated and refined condition of being, than that with which they are conversant; and, though they may possess a subtle and penetrating genius, they are not less disqualified for religious inquiries than an idiot or an infant. "They mind earthly things."

How far the indisposition to religious controversy, which prevails at present, may be justly ascribed to this Sadducean temper, I shall not pretend to determine. It is certain, however, that in some this indisposition proceeds from a better cause. While the former class of persons think religion not worth disputing about, there are others who conceive it to be a subject too sacred for dispute. They wish to confine it to silent meditation, to sweeten solitude, to inspire devotion, to guide the practice, and purify the heart, and never to appear in public but in the character of the authentic interpreter of the will of heaven. They conceive it degraded when it is brought forward to combat on the arena. We are fully convinced that a disputatious humour is unfavourable to piety, and that controversies in religion have often been unnecessarily multiplied and extended; but how they can be dispensed with altogether we are at a loss to

discover, until some other method is discovered of confuting error than sound and solid argument. As we no longer live in times (God be thanked!) when coercion can be employed, or when any individual, or any body of men, is invested with that authority which could silence disputes by an oracular decision, there appears no possibility of maintaining the interests of truth, without having recourse to temperate and candid controversy. Perhaps the sober use of this weapon may not be without its advantages even at the present season. Prone as we are to extremes, may there not be some reason to apprehend, we have passed from that propensity to magnify every difference subsisting amongst christians to a neglect of just discrimination; to a habit of contemplating the christian system as one in which there is little or nothing that remains to be explored? Let us cultivate the most cordial esteem for all that love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. Let us anxiously guard against that asperity and contempt which have too often mingled with theological debates; but let us aim, at the same time, to acquire and retain the most accurate conceptions of religious truth. Every improvement in the knowledge of Christ, and the mysteries of his gospel, will abundantly compensate for the labour and attention necessary to its attainment.

However unhappily controversies have too often been conducted, the assistance they have afforded in the discovery of truth is not light or incon-

siderable. Not to mention the Reformation, which was principally effected by controversy, how many truths have by this means been set in a clearer view! and, whilst the unhappy passions it has awakened have subsided, the light struck out in the collision has been retained and perpetuated.

As the physical powers are scarcely ever exerted to their utmost extent, but in the ardour of combat, so intellectual acumen has been displayed to the most advantage, and to the most effect, in the contests of argument. The mind of a controversialist, warmed and agitated, is turned to all quarters, and leaves none of its resources unemployed in the invention of arguments, tries every weapon, and explores the hidden recesses of a subject with an intense vigilance, and an ardour which it is next to impossible in a calmer state of mind to command. Disingenuous arts are often resorted to, personalities are mingled, and much irritative matter is introduced; but it is the business of the attentive observer to separate these from the question at issue, and to form an impartial judgement of the whole. In a word, it may be truly affirmed that the evils of controversy are transient, the good it produces is permanent.

These observations I beg leave to submit to the reader, as an apology for the republication of a treatise which is confessedly controversial. Coinciding with the venerable author in the general aim and drift of the following sheets, I am far from pledging myself to the approbation and support of

every position contained in them; nor would I be understood to attach all the importance to some of the points of discussion, which they appear, in his estimation, to have possessed.

If there be any impression, in the following treatise, which implies that the questions at issue betwixt the calvinists and arminians are of the nature of *fundamentals*, (of which, however, I am not aware,) I beg leave, as far as they are concerned, to express my explicit dissent; being fully satisfied that upon either system the foundations of human hope remain unshaken, and that there is nothing, in the contrariety of views entertained on these subjects, which ought to obstruct the most cordial affection and harmony among christians.

Having no pecuniary interest in this work, I may, perhaps, be allowed with more freedom to communicate my opinion of its merit. I am much mistaken if the candid reader will not perceive in the author an impartial love of truth, together with a degree of ingenuity and acuteness in its illustration and defence, not always to be met with in theological discussions.

The sentiments of my honoured father were decidedly calvinistic. His object, however, in the following treatise, was not so much to recommend that system in general, as to disengage it from certain excrescences, which he considered as weakening its evidence and impairing its beauty. On reviewing his religious tenets during the latter years of his life, and impartially comparing them

with the Scriptures, he was led to discard some opinions which he had formerly embraced, and which he afterwards came to consider as having a pernicious tendency.

From the moral impotence which the oracles of truth ascribe to man, in his fallen state, a certain class of divines were induced to divide moral and religious duties into two classes, natural and spiritual; comprehending under the latter those which require spiritual or supernatural assistance to their performance, and under the former those which demand no such assistance. Agreeable to this distinction, they conceived it to be the duty of all men to abstain from the outward acts of sin, to read the Scriptures, to frequent the worship of God, and to attend with serious assiduity to the means of grace; but they supposed that repentance, faith in Christ, and the exercise of genuine internal devotion, were obligatory only to the regenerate. Hence their ministry consisted almost entirely of an exhibition of the peculiar mysteries of the gospel, with few or no addresses to the unconverted. They conceived themselves not warranted to urge them to repent and believe the gospel, — those being the spiritual duties, from whose obligation they were released by the inability contracted by the fall.

These conclusions were evidently founded upon two assumptions: first, that the impotence which the Scriptures ascribe to the unregenerate is free from blame, so as to excuse them from all the

duties to which it extends. In opposition to this, the author of the following treatise has proved, in a very satisfactory manner, that the inability under which the unconverted labour is altogether of a moral nature, consisting in the corruption of the will, or an aversion to things of a spiritual and divine nature that is in itself criminal; and that, so far from affording an excuse for what would otherwise be a duty, it stamps with its own character all its issues and productions.

In considering the moral character of an action, we are naturally led to inquire into its motive; and according as that is criminal, laudable, or indifferent, to characterize the action whence it proceeds. The motive, however, appears no otherwise entitled to commendation, than as it indicates the disposition of the agent; so that, in analyzing the elements of moral character, we can ascend no higher than to the consideration of the disposition, or the state of the will and of the affections, as constituting the essence of that portion of virtue or of vice which we respectively ascribe to it. To proceed farther will only involve us in a circle; since to whatever we might trace the disposition in question, should we be induced, for example, to ascribe it to the free exercise of the will, that exercise would fall under the same predicament, and be considered either as virtuous or vicious, according to the disposition whence it proceeds. When the Scriptures have placed the inability of mankind to yield holy and acceptable obedience, in

an evil disposition, or in blindness or hardness of heart, they have conducted us to the ultimate point on this subject, and have established the doctrine of human criminality upon a basis which cannot be shaken or disturbed, without confounding the first principles of moral discrimination. Though this is manifest, this impotence is entirely of a moral nature, totally distinct from the want of natural faculties. It is equally evident, that, to whatever extent it exists, while it actually subsists, it is as effectual an impediment to the performance of holy actions as any physical privation whatever: and on that account, and on that alone, may, without absurdity, be styled an *inability*. This important distinction was not wholly unknown to our earlier divines, though they neglected to avail themselves of it as fully as they ought: it is clearly stated by the great Mr. Howe, in his Blessedness of the Righteous, as well as adverted to by Mr. Baxter in several of his practical works. But the earliest regular treatise on this subject it has been my lot to meet with, was the production of Mr. Truman, an eminent nonconformist divine. In his Dissertation on Moral Impotence, as he styles it, he has anticipated the most important arguments of succeeding writers, and has evinced throughout a most masterly acquaintance with his subject. This work is mentioned in terms of high respect by Nelson, in his Life of Bishop Bull, who remarks that his thoughts were original, and that he had hit upon a method of defending calvinism, against the

objections of Bull and others, peculiar to himself. His claim to perfect originality, however, was not so well founded as Nelson supposed. Since his time, the subject has been fully discussed by the celebrated Jonathan Edwards, in his Treatise on the Will, and the distinction defended, with all the depth and precision peculiar to that amazing genius.

Another principle, assumed as a basis by the high calvinists, is, that the same things cannot be the duty of man and the gift of God; or, in other words, that what is matter of promise, can, on no occasion, be the matter of obligation. The Scriptures frequently affirm faith and repentance to be the gift of God; hence it is concluded that they cannot be obligatory on the unregenerate,—a conclusion diametrically opposed to innumerable passages in the Old and New Testament, which insist, in the most peremptory style, on true conversion and a lively faith as the most essential duties, which other passages are equally express in exhibiting as matter of promise. "A new heart will I give them," says the Lord, by Ezekiel, "and a new spirit will I put within them, and I will take away the heart of stone, and give them a heart of flesh." The same prophet cries, "Make yourselves a new heart; for why will ye die, ye house of Israel?"—in exact accordance with the language of St. James, "Cleanse your hands, ye sinners, and purify your hearts, ye double-minded." The burthen of our Saviour's ministry, as well as that of his

forerunner, was, "Repent, for the kingdom of God is at hand;" while St. Peter, who perfectly knew the genius of christianity, affirms that Christ is "exalted, to give repentance and the remission of sins." "Circumcise your hearts," said Moses, "and be no longer stiffnecked." The same Moses had been previously commissioned to declare, "The Lord thy God will circumcise thy heart, and the heart of thy seed." Now the circumcision of the heart, we are taught by St. Paul, in his epistle to the Romans, to regard as the distinguishing feature of the truly regenerate—of him "who is a Jew inwardly, whose praise is not of man, but of God." Whoever impartially weighs the import of these scriptures, must be convinced that the same things are, in fact, matter of command and the subject of promise, and must consequently be prepared to acquiesce in the decision of Infinite Wisdom on this subject, however much he may be at a loss to explain or account for it. The consistency of the promises, and of the commands in question, arises from the matter of each being of a moral nature. If we will allow ourselves to reflect, we shall perceive that the will, and the will only, is the proper object of command; and that an agent is no otherwise accountable, or susceptible of moral government, than as he is the subject of voluntary powers: we shall also perceive, that the disordered state of the will, or the radical indisposition of an agent to comply with legitimate commands, which is the same thing, by no means exempts him from

their obligation, nor tends, in the least degree, to render the addressing such commands to him absurd or improper. That they will not be complied with, while that disordered state subsists, is true: but legitimate commands, enforced by proper sanctions, are amongst the strongest motives; that is, they tend, in their own nature, to incline the will, and therefore they cannot be withheld without virtually relinquishing the claim of authority and dominion. This may suffice to evince the propriety of issuing commands, notwithstanding the known and radical indisposition to comply; or, which comes to the same thing, whatever be the *state of the will.*

With respect to the other side of the supposed contradiction, what can be plainer than that the will, as well as every other faculty of the mind, is under divine control, and that God can, with infinite ease, in what instances and in what manner he please, so change and modify it, as to induce a prompt and cheerful compliance with his requisition? What should prevent him, at whose disposal are the hearts of the mightiest of men, "to make his people willing in the day of his power?"

It is instructive, as well as amusing, to trace the coincidence which is often found betwixt systems which appear, at first view, at the utmost variance from each other. The grosser arminians and pelagians contend, that it is the duty of all men to repent and believe, because all possess an inherent power of so doing, without special and divine

assistance. The high calvinists, on the contrary, deny that men, in a state of unregeneracy, are under an obligation to perform those duties, because they are not possessed of the requisite ability. Thus, both concur in making moral ability the measure of obligation; a position which, when the terms are accurately defined and cleared of their ambiguity, conducts us to this very extraordinary conclusion, that men are obliged to just as much of duty as they are inclined to. On these and other points connected with them, the reader, if we are not mistaken, will find much solid instruction in the following treatise, accompanied with such a constant attention to the great end of theological discussion—the promotion of practical piety, as can scarcely fail of affording high satisfaction to serious minds. To this treatise, and to another on a similar subject, by my excellent and judicious friend, Mr. Fuller, the dissenters in general, and the baptists in particular, are under great obligation, for emancipating them from the fetters of prejudice, and giving free scope to the publication of the gospel. By these means a considerable revolution has been effected in the sentiments of the denomination to which I have the honour to belong: the excrescences of calvinism have been cut off;—the points of defence have been diminished in number, and better fortified;—truth has shone forth with brighter lustre;—and the ministry of the gospel has been rendered more simple, more practical, and more efficacious.

In reply to such as may object to the metaphysical subtlety which pervades some parts of the following treatise, I would avail myself of the distinction admirably illustrated by the author of the Light of Nature Pursued.* He observes, that although metaphysical reason rarely, if ever, conduces to the discovery of truth, it is of great advantage in the detection of sophistry; and that the mist and confusion in which moral subjects have been involved, by crude and undigested metaphysics, can only be exploded by the temperate use of that which is true and genuine: so that the chief praise of metaphysics is the cure of its own ills, the repair of the mischief which itself has wrought. The reader will observe that the author employs metaphysics, not to rear the fabric of truth, which can only be effected by a profound deference to inspiration, but to demolish a rotten superstructure which conceals its beauty. For the want of elegance or polish, discernible in the following sheets, it will be sufficient apology to inform the reader, that the author, destitute of the advantages of early education, had no other resources to depend upon, in his religious inquiries, than what were derived from the vigour of his understanding, and his unbiassed integrity of heart. Had he enjoyed the benefit of lite · ry culture, he would have undoubtedly written in a style and manner more adapted to gain the attention of the superior classes: whether his reasoning would have been more cogent,

* Abraham Tucker.

or his method of handling his subject better fitted for the instruction of plain serious christians, for whose benefit he principally laboured, is more questionable.

Gratitude and veneration compel me to add, that with all the imperfections of the work, and the disadvantages under which the author of it laboured, I shall ever esteem it one of the greatest favours an indulgent Providence has bestowed upon me, to have possessed such a father, whom, in all the essential features of character, it will be my humble ambition to imitate, though conscious it must ever be

—" Haud passibus æquis."

ROBERT HALL.

PREFACE TO JANEWAY'S LIFE.

[Written in 1816.]

At the request of a highly esteemed friend, I feel no hesitation in recommending the remarkable narrative, now republished, to the serious attention of the reader. It exhibits a life eminently formed on the example of Christ, and a death-bed scene of extraordinary elevation and triumph. It is next to impossible to contemplate either, as they are exhibited in the following memorial, without feeling an increasing conviction of the reality and dignity of true religion. I am aware that some will object to the strain of devout ecstasy which characterizes the sentiments and language of Mr. Janeway in his dying moments; but I am persuaded they will meet with nothing, however ecstatic and elevated, but what corresponds to the dictates of scripture and the analogy of the faith. He who recollects that the Scriptures speak of a "peace which passeth all understanding, and a joy unspeakable and full of glory," will not be offended at the lively expressions of these contained in this narrative: he will be more disposed to lament the low state of his own

religious feeling than to suspect the propriety of sentiments the most rational and scriptural, merely because they rise to a pitch that he has never reached. The sacred oracles afford no countenance to the supposition that devotional feelings are to be condemned as visionary and enthusiastic, merely on account of their intenseness and elevation: provided they be of a right kind, and spring from legitimate sources, they never teach us to suspect they can be carried too far. David "danced before the Lord with all his might;" and when he was reproached for degrading himself in the eyes of the people by indulging these transports, he replied, If this be to be vile, "I will yet make myself more vile." That the objects which interest the heart in religion are infinitely more durable and important than all others, will not be disputed: and why should it be deemed irrational to be affected by them in a degree somewhat suitable to their value, especially in the near prospect of their full and perfect possession? Why should it be deemed strange or irrational for a dying saint, who has spent his life in the pursuit of immortal good, to feel an unspeakable ecstasy at finding he has just touched the goal, finished his course, and in a few moments is to be crowned with life everlasting? While he dwells on the inconceivably glorious prospect before him, and feels himself lost in wonder and gratitude, and almost oppressed with a sense of his unutterable obligations to the love of his Creator and Redeemer, nothing can be

more natural and proper than his sentiments and conduct. While the Scriptures retain their rank as the only rule of faith and practice,—while there are those who feel the power of true religion,—such death-bed scenes as Mr. Janeway's will be contemplated with veneration and delight. It affords no inconsiderable confirmation of the truth of christianity, that the most celebrated sages of pagan antiquity, whose last moments have been exhibited with inimitable propriety and beauty, present nothing equal nor similar; nothing of that singular combination of humility and elevation, that self-renouncing greatness, in which the creature appears annihilated, and God all in all. I am much mistaken if the serious reader will not find, in the closing scenes of Mr. Janeway's life, the most perfect form of christianity: he will find it, not, as it is too often, clouded with doubts and oppressed with sorrows; he will behold it ascend the mount, transfigured, glorified, and encircled with the beams of celestial majesty.

Let me be permitted, however, to observe that the experience of Mr. Janeway, in his last moments, while it developes the native tendency of christianity, is not to be considered as a standard to ordinary christians. He affords a great example of what is attainable in religion, and not of what is indispensably necessary to salvation. Thousands die in the Lord, who are not indulged with the privilege of dying in triumph. His extraordinary diligence in the whole of his christian career, his

tenderness of conscience, his constant vigilance, his vehement hunger and thirst after righteousness, met with a signal reward, intended, probably, not more for his own personal advantage, than as a persuasive to others to walk in his steps. As he was incessantly solicitous to improve his graces, purify his principles, and "to perfect holiness in the fear of the Lord," no wonder he was favoured with an abundant entrance into "the joy of his Lord." "He which soweth sparingly shall reap sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully."

ROBERT HALL.

RECOMMENDATORY PREFACE

TO A

VOLUME OF HYMNS,

Composed by the late Rev. B. Beddome, M. A.

[WRITTEN IN 1819.]

FAR be it from me to indulge the presumptuous idea of adding to the merited reputation of Mr. Beddome, by my feeble suffrage. But having had the pleasure of a personal acquaintance with that eminent man, and cherishing a high esteem for his memory, I am induced to comply the more cheerfully with the wishes of the editor, by prefixing a few words to the present publication. Mr. Beddome was on many accounts an extraordinary person. His mind was cast in an original mould; his conceptions on every subject were eminently his own; and where the stamina of his thoughts were the same as other men's, (as must often be the case with the most original thinkers,) a peculiarity marked the mode of their exhibition. Favoured with the advantages of a learned education, he continued to the last to cultivate an acquaintance with the best writers of antiquity, to which he was much indebted for the chaste,

terse, and nervous diction, which distinguished his compositions both in prose and verse. Though he spent the principal part of a long life in a village retirement, he was eminent for his colloquial powers, in which he displayed the urbanity of the gentleman and the erudition of the scholar, combined with a more copious vein of attic salt than any person it has been my lot to know. As a preacher he was universally admired for the piety and unction of his sentiments, the felicity of his arrangement, and the purity, force, and simplicity of his language, all of which were recommended by a delivery perfectly natural and graceful. His printed discourses, taken from the manuscripts which he left behind him at his decease, are fair specimens of his usual performances in the pulpit. They are eminent for the qualities already mentioned; and their merits, which the modesty of the author concealed from himself, have been justly appreciated by the religious public. As a religious poet, his excellence has long been known and acknowledged in dissenting congregations, in consequence of several admirable compositions inserted in some popular compilations. The variety of the subjects treated of, the poetical beauty and elevation of some, the simple pathos of others, and the piety and justness of thought which pervade all the compositions in the succeeding volume, will, we trust, be deemed a valuable accession to the treasures of sacred poetry, equally adapted to the closet and to the

sanctuary.—The man of taste will be gratified with the beautiful and original turns of thought which many of them exhibit; while the experimental christian will often perceive the most secret movements of his soul strikingly delineated, and sentiments portrayed which will find their echo in every heart. Considerable pains have been taken to arrange the hymns in such a manner as is best adapted to selection, from a persuasion, which we trust the event will justify, that they will be found the most proper supplement to Dr. Watts that has yet appeared.

R. HALL.

A PREFACE

TO

ANTINOMIANISM UNMASKED,

BY THE REV. SAMUEL CHASE.

[WRITTEN IN 1819.]

IT is with considerable reluctance that I have complied with the request of the highly esteemed author of the following work, by prefixing a short preface; not from the slightest hesitation respecting the excellence of the work itself, but from an aversion to the seeming arrogance of pretending to recommend what might rest so securely on its own merits. The reader, if I am not greatly mistaken, will find in this treatise a train of close and cogent reasoning from the oracles of God, sufficient to overturn from its foundation the principles which compose the antinomian heresy; which, he will be at no loss to perceive, are as much opposed to the *grace,* as to the authority, of the great Head of the church.

The fundamental tenet of the system to which this treatise is opposed, consists in the denial of the *obligation* of believers to obey the precepts of Christ,

in supposing that their interest in the merits of the Redeemer releases them from all subjection to his authority; and, as it is acknowledged on all hands that he is the sole Lord of the christian dispensation, the immediate consequence is, that, as far as *they* are concerned, the moral government of the Deity is annihilated—that they have ceased to be accountable creatures. But this involves the total subversion of religion: for what idea can we form of a religion in which all the obligations of piety and morality are done away; in which nothing is binding or imperative on the conscience? We may conceive of a religious code under all the possible gradations of laxness or severity—of its demanding more or less, or of its enforcing its injunctions by penalties more or less formidable;—but, to form a conception of a system deserving the name of religion, which prescribes no duties whatever, and is enforced by no sanctions, seems an impossibility. On this account it appears to me improper to speak of antinomianism as a *religious* error; religion, whether true or false, has nothing to do with it: it is rather to be considered as an attempt to substitute a system of subtle and specious impiety in the room of christianity. In their own estimation, its disciples are a privileged class, who dwell in a secluded region of unshaken security and lawless liberty, while the rest of the christian world are the vassals of legal bondage, toiling in darkness and in chains. Hence, whatever diversity of character they may display in other respects, a haughty and

bitter disdain of every other class of professors is a universal feature. Contempt or hatred of the most devout and enlightened christians, out of their own pale, seems one of the most essential elements of their being; nor were the ancient Pharisees ever more notorious for "trusting in themselves that they were righteous, and despising others."

Of the force of legitimate argument they seem to have little or no perception, having contracted an inveterate and pernicious habit of shutting their eyes against the plainest and most pointed declarations of the word of God. The only attempt they make to support their miserable system, is to adduce a number of detached and insulated passages of scripture, forcibly torn from their context, and interpreted with more regard to their sound than to their meaning, as ascertained by the laws of sober criticism. Could they be prevailed upon to engage in serious dispassionate controversy, some hope might be indulged of reclaiming them; their errors would admit of an easy confutation: but the misfortune is, they seem to feel themselves as much released from the restraints of reason, as of moral obligation; and the intoxication of spiritual pride has incomparably more influence in forming their persuasions, than the light of evidence.

As far as they are concerned, my expectation of benefit from the following treatise is far from being sanguine. To others, however, who may be in danger of falling a prey to their seduction, it may

prove an important preservative; to the young and inexperienced, it will hold out a faithful warning, by unmasking the deformity and revealing the danger of that pretended doctrine of grace which is employed to annul the obligation of obedience. They will learn from this treatise, that the authority of Christ, as Legislator, is perfectly compatible with his office as the Redeemer of his people; that the renewal of the soul in true holiness forms a principal part of the salvation he came to bestow; that the privileges of the evangelical dispensation are inseparably combined with its duties; and that every hope of eternal life is necessarily presumptuous and unfounded, which is not connected with "keeping the commandments of God." They will perceive the beautiful analogy subsisting between the mosaic and christian dispensation; and that the redemption wrought out upon the cross is just as subservient to the spiritual dominion of Christ over his people, as was the deliverance of the Israelites from Egypt to the erection of a theocracy in the Holy Land: in a word, they will plainly see that the regal authority of Christ over his church belongs to the very essence of the evangelical economy, considered as an annunciation of the *kingdom* or *reign* of God.

To trace the process of antinomianism, and investigate the steps by which it has gradually attained its fearful ascendency, though an interesting inquiry, would lead me far beyond the limits of this preface. Suffice it to suggest a few circumstances

which appear to me to have contributed not a little to that result. When religious parties have been long formed, a certain technical phraseology, invented in order to designate, more exactly, the peculiarities of the respective systems, naturally grows up. What custom has sanctioned, in process of time becomes law; and the slightest deviation from the consecrated diction comes to be viewed with suspicion and alarm. Now the technical language appropriated to the expression of the calvinistic system in its nicer shades, however justifiable in itself, has, by its perpetual recurrence, narrowed the vocabulary of religion, and rendered obsolete many modes of expression which the sacred writers indulge without scruple. The latitude with which they express themselves on various subjects has been gradually relinquished; a scrupulous and systematic cast of diction has succeeded to the manly freedom and noble negligence they were accustomed to display; and many expressions, employed without hesitation in scripture, are rarely found, except in the direct form of quotation, in the mouth of a modern calvinist.

In addition to this, nothing is more usual than for the zealous abettors of a system, with the best intentions, to magnify the importance of its peculiar tenets by hyperbolical exaggerations, calculated to identify them with the fundamental articles of faith. Thus, the calvinistic doctrines have often been denominated, by divines of deservedly high reputation, *the doctrines of grace;* implying, not

merely their truth, but that they constitute the very essence and marrow of the gospel. Hence persons of little reflection have been tempted to conclude that the zealous inculcation of these comprehends nearly the whole system of revealed truth, or as much of it, at least, as is of vital importance; and that no danger whatever can result from giving them the greatest possible prominence. But the transition from a partial exhibition of truth to the adoption of positive error is a most natural one: and he who commences with consigning certain important doctrines to oblivion, will generally end in perverting or denying them. The authority of the laws of Christ, his proper dominion over his people, and the absolute necessity of evangelical obedience in order to eternal life, though perfectly consistent, in my apprehension, with calvinism, form no part of it, considered as a separate system. In the systematic mode of instruction they are consequently omitted, or so slightly and sparingly adverted to, that they are gradually lost sight of; and when they are presented to the attention, being supported by no habitual mental associations, they wear the features of a strange and exotic character. They are repelled with disgust and suspicion, not because they are perceived to be at variance with the dictates of inspiration, (their agreement with which may be immediately obvious,) but, simply, because they deviate from the trains of thought which the hearer is accustomed to pursue with complacency. It is purely an affair of taste; it is

neither the opposition of reason, nor of conscience, which is concerned, but the mere operation of antipathy.

The paucity of practical instruction,—the practice of dwelling almost exclusively, in the exercise of the ministry, on doctrinal and experimental topics, with a sparing inculcation of the precepts of Christ and the duties of morality,—is abundantly sufficient, without the slightest admixture of error, to produce the effect of which we are speaking: nor is it to be doubted that even holy and exemplary men have by these means paved the way for antinomianism. When they have found it necessary to advert to points of morality, and to urge them on scriptural motives, the difference between these and their usual strain of instruction has produced a sort of mental revulsion. Conscious, meanwhile, that they have taught nothing but the pure and uncorrupted word of God,—have inculcated no doctrine but what appears to be sustained by the fair interpretation of the word,—they are astonished at perceiving the eager impetuosity with which a part of their hearers run into antinomian excesses: when a thorough investigation might convince them, that, though they have inculcated truth, it has not been altogether "as it is in Jesus;" that many awakening and alarming considerations familiar to the Scriptures have been neglected, much of their pungent and practical appeal to the conscience suppressed, and a profusion of cordials and stimulants administered, where cathartics were required.

In the New Testament, the absolute subserviency of doctrinal statements to the formation of the principles and habits of practical piety, is never lost sight of; we are continually reminded that obedience is the end of all knowledge, and of all religious impressions. But the tendency, it is to be feared, of much popular and orthodox instruction, is to bestow on the belief of certain doctrines, combined with strong religious emotion, the importance of an ultimate object, to the neglect of that great principle that "circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but the keeping of the commandments of God." While it is but candid to suppose that some are beguiled through the "good words and fair speeches" by which the apostles of antinomianism recommend themselves to the unlearned and unstable, it can scarcely be doubted that they are chiefly indebted for their success to the aversion which many feel to christianity as a *practical* system. Divest it of its precepts and its sanctions,—represent it as a mere charter of privileges,—a provision for investing a certain class with a title to eternal life, independent of every moral discrimination,—and it will be eagerly embraced: but it will not be the religion of the New Testament; it will not be the religion of him who closed his Sermon on the Mount by reminding his hearers that he who "heareth his sayings, and doeth them not, shall be likened to a man who built his house upon the sand, and the storm came, and the rains

descended, and the winds blew, and beat on that house, and it fell, because it was founded upon the sand."

The most effectual antidote to the leaven of antinomianism will probably be found in the frequent and earnest inculcation of the practical precepts of the gospel; in an accurate delineation of the christian temper; in a specific and minute exposition of the personal, social, and relative duties, enforced at one time by the endearing, at another by the alarming, motives, which revelation abundantly suggests. To overlook the distinguishing doctrines of the gospel, under the pretence of advancing the interests of morality, is one extreme; to inculcate those doctrines, without habitually adverting to their purifying and transforming influence, is another, not less dangerous. If the former involves the folly of attempting to rear a structure without a foundation, the latter leaves it naked and useless.

A large infusion of practical instruction may be expected to operate as an alterative in the moral constitution. Without displacing a single article from the established creed,—without modifying or changing the minutest particle of speculative belief,—it will generate a habit of contemplating religion in its true character, as a system of moral government, as a wise and gracious provision for reestablishing the dominion of God in the heart of an apostate creature. Though there must unquestionably be a perfect agreement betwixt all

revealed truths, because truth is ever consistent with itself, yet they are not all adapted to produce the same immediate impression. They contribute to the same ultimate object, "the perfecting the man of God," by opposite tendencies; and, while some are immediately adapted to inspire confidence and joy, others are fitted to produce vigilance and fear; like different species of diet, which may, in their turn, be equally conducive to health, though their action on the system be dissimilar. Hence it is of great importance, not merely that the doctrine that is taught be sound and scriptural, but that the proportion maintained amidst the various articles of religious instruction coincide, as far as possible, with the inspired model; that each doctrine occupy its proper place in the scale; that the whole counsel of God be unfolded, and no one part of revealed truth be presented with a frequency and prominence which shall cast the others into shade. The progress of antinomianism, if I am not greatly mistaken, may be ascribed, in a great measure, to the neglect of these precautions,—to an intemperate, and almost exclusive, inculcation of doctrinal points.

Even when the necessity of an exemplary conduct is enforced upon christians, an attentive and intelligent hearer will frequently perceive a manifest difference between the motives by which it is urged, and those which are presented by the inspired writers. The latter are not afraid of reminding every description of professors, without

exception, that "if they live after the flesh they shall die;" and that they will then only "be partakers of Christ if they hold fast the beginning of their confidence, and rejoicing of their hope, firm unto the end:" while too many content themselves with insisting on considerations, which, whatever weight they may possess on a devout and tender spirit, it is the first effect of sinful indulgence to impair. Of this nature is the menace of spiritual desertion, darkness, absence of religious consolation, and other spiritual evils, which will always be found to be less alarming, just in proportion to the degree of religious declension. To combat the moral distempers to which the professors of religion are liable, by such antidotes as these, is appealing to a certain refinement of feeling, which the disease has extinguished or diminished, instead of alarming them with the prospect of death. It was not by sentimental addresses, nor by an appeal to the delicacies and sensibilities of a soul diseased, that the apostles proposed to alarm the fears, or revive the vigilance, of disorderly walkers: they drew aside the veil of eternity; they presented the thought, in all its terror, of the coming of Christ, "as a thief in the night." I would not be understood to insinuate, that the more refined topics of appeal may not occasionally be resorted to with great propriety; all I would be supposed to regret is, the exclusive employment of a class of considerations, of one order of motives, derived from religious sensibility, to the

neglect of those which are founded on eternal prospects and interests. As it is seldom safe for an accountable creature to lose sight of these in his most elevated moments; so, least of all can they be dispensed with in the season of successful temptation. It is then especially, if I am not greatly mistaken, whatever may have been our past profession or attainments, that we need to be reminded of the awful certainty of future retribution, to recall to our remembrance that "whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." If, in the scheme of doctrine we have embraced, we suspect there is something incompatible with the use of such admonitions, we may be assured, either that the doctrine itself is false, or that our inference from it is erroneous, since no speculative tenets in religion can be so indubitably certain, as the universality of the moral government of God.

Before I close this preface, I must be permitted to add, that the prevailing practice of representing the promises of the gospel as *unconditional*, or, at least, of carefully avoiding the obvious phraseology which the contrary supposition would suggest, appears to me directly to pave the way to antinomianism. The idea of *meritorious* conditions is, indeed, utterly incompatible with the gospel, considered as a system of grace. But if there be no conditions of salvation whatever, how it is possible to confute the pretensions, or confound the confidence, of the most licentious professor, I am at

an utter loss to discover. It will be in vain to allege the entire absence of internal holiness, together with all the fruits of the Spirit, as defeating his hope of eternal life; since, upon the supposition we are combating, the answer is ready, that the enjoyment of future felicity is suspended on no conditions. The absurdity of this notion is not less palpable than its presumption. All promises must either be made to individuals by name, or indefinitely to persons of a specific character. A moment's attention will be sufficient to satisfy us that the promise of pardon in the New Testament is of the latter description; in no one instance is it addressed to the individual by name, but to the penitent, the believing, the obedient, or to some similar specification of character. Before any person, therefore, can justly appropriate the promise to himself, he must ascertain his possession of that character; or, which is precisely the same thing, he must perceive that he comes within the prescribed condition. When it is affirmed that "except we repent we shall perish," is it not manifest that he only is entitled to claim exemption from that doom who is conscious of the feelings of a penitent? For the same reason, if he only who believes shall be saved, our assurance of salvation, as far as it depends upon evidence, must be exactly proportioned to the certainty we feel of our actual believing. To abandon these principles is to involve ourselves in an inextricable labyrinth, to lie open to the grossest delusions, to build conclusions

of infinite moment on phantoms light as air. He who flatters himself with the hope of salvation, without perceiving in himself a specific difference of character from "the world that lieth in wickedness," either founds his persuasion absolutely on nothing, or on an immediate revelation,—on a preternatural discovery of a matter of fact, on which the Scriptures are totally silent. This absurd notion of unconditional promises, by severing the assurance of salvation from all the fruits of the Spirit, from every trace and feature of a renovated nature, and a regenerate state, opens the widest possible door to licentiousness.

As far as it is sustained by the least shadow of reasoning, it may be traced to the practice of confounding the secret purposes of the Supreme Being with his revealed promises. That in the breast of the Deity an eternal purpose has been formed, respecting the salvation of a certain portion of the human race, is a doctrine which it appears to me is clearly revealed. But this secret purpose is so far from being incompatible with the necessary conditions of salvation, that they form a part of it; their existence is an inseparable link in the execution of the divine decree: for the same wisdom which has appointed the end has also infallibly determined the means by which it shall be accomplished; and as the personal direction of the decree remains a secret, until it is developed in the event, it cannot possibly, considered in itself, lay a foundation for confidence.

That a certain number of the human race are ordained to eternal life may be inferred from many passages of scripture; but, if any person infers from these general premises that he is of that number, he advances a proposition without the slightest colour of evidence. An assurance of salvation can, consequently, in no instance, be deduced from the doctrine of absolute decrees, until they manifest themselves in their actual effects; that is, in that renewal of the heart which the Bible affirms to be essential to future felicity.

But I am detaining the reader too long from the pleasure and advantage he may promise himself from the perusal of the following treatise, where he will meet with no illiberal insinuations, no personal invective,—the too frequent seasoning of controversy, and the ordinary gratification of vulgar minds,—but a series of calm and dispassionate reasonings out of the Scriptures. That they may produce all the beneficial results which the excellent author has so much at heart, is the fervent prayer of the writer of these lines.

ROBERT HALL.

Leicester, July 2, 1819.

A LETTER

TO

THE REV. W. BENNETT,

Author of an Essay on the Gospel Constitution.

DEAR SIR, *January* 18, 1810.

I OUGHT sooner to have acknowledged to you the great pleasure I derived from the performance you were so kind as to give me at Northampton. I have read it with as much attention as I am able; and, though the subject is involved in so much difficulty, I admired the perspicuity with which it was treated, so as to be within the limits of an ordinary capacity. There is a precision and comprehension in the choice of terms, and a luminous track of thought pervading the whole, which, according to my apprehension, has scarcely been equalled, and never exceeded, in the discussion of such points. I do think you have steered a happy medium, between the rigidity of calvinism and the laxness of arminianism, and have succeeded in the solution of the grand difficulty—the consistency between general offers and invitations, and the speciality of divine grace. This interesting question

is handled with masterly ability. I am particularly delighted with your explicit statement, and vindication of the established connexion between the use of instituted means and the attainment of divine blessings, and the consequent hypothetical possibility of the salvation of all men, where the gospel comes. On this point, the representations of calvinists have long appeared to me very defective; and that, fettered by their system, they have by no means gone so far in encouraging and urging sinners to the use of prayer, reading the Scriptures, self-examination, &c., as the Scriptures justify. They have contented themselves too much with enjoining and inculcating the duty of faith, which, however important and indispensable, is not, I apprehend, usually imparted till men have been earnestly led to seek and strive. Here the arminians, such of them as are evangelical, have had greatly the advantage of the calvinists in pleading with sinners. Your great principle of the design of religion, in every dispensation of it, being intended as the pursuit of the plan of divine government for exercising the moral powers and faculties of creatures, is grand and noble, and gives continuity and harmony to the whole scheme. I lent your book to Mr. B——, who is much pleased with it, and only wishes you had expressed yourself more fully in favour of the general extent of Christ's death. I think you have asserted it by implication, though I wish you had asserted it unequivocally, because I am fully persuaded it is a doctrine of scripture, and

that it forms the only consistent basis of unlimited invitations. I think the most enlightened calvinists are too reserved on this head; and that their refusal to declare, with the concurrent testimony of scripture, that Christ died for all men, tends to confirm the prejudices of methodists, and others, against election and special grace. With this small exception, if it be an exception, your work appears to me to be entitled to the highest approbation and applause; and I cannot but hope it will have an important effect in bringing good men nearer together; than which I know nothing more desirable. Wishing you much success in every labour of your hands,

I remain, Dear Sir,

With high esteem,

Your affectionate brother,

ROBERT HALL.

AN EXTRACT

FROM

DR. JOHNSON'S PREFACE TO COWPER'S CORRESPONDENCE.

"I ACCOUNT myself particularly fortunate, in being favoured with the opinion of confessedly one of the best judges of composition that this country has to boast—the Rev. Robert Hall, of Leicester. In a letter addressed to me, on the 19th of August of the present year, 1823, he writes thus:—

'It is quite unnecessary to say that I perused the letters with great admiration and delight. I have always considered the letters of Mr. Cowper as the finest specimen of the epistolary style in our language; and these appear to me of a superior description to the former, possessing as much beauty with more piety and pathos. To an air of inimitable ease and carelessness, they unite a high degree of correctness, such as could result only from the clearest intellect, combined with the most finished taste. I have scarcely found a single word which is capable of being exchanged for a better.'

'Literary errors I can discern none. The selection of words, and the structure of the periods, are inimitable; they present as striking a contrast as can well be conceived to the turgid verbosity which passes at present for fine writing, and which bears a great resemblance to the degeneracy which marks the style of Ammianus Marcellinus, as compared to that of Cicero or of Livy. A perpetual effort and struggle is made to supply the place of vigour, garish and dazzling colours are substituted for chaste ornament, and the hideous distortions of weakness for native strength. In my humble opinion, the study of Cowper's prose may, on this account, be as useful in forming the taste of young people as his poetry.'

'That the letters will afford great delight to all persons of true taste, and that you will confer a most acceptable present on the reading world by publishing them, will not admit of a doubt.'"

THE

SPIRITUAL CONDITION AND PROSPECTS

OF

THE JEWS.

[WRITTEN IN 1826, FOR A PERIODICAL PUBLICATION.]

FEW perhaps are to be found who have made religion the object of their serious attention, who have not bestowed some thought on the spiritual condition and prospects of the Jews,—a people on many accounts the most remarkable of any that have appeared on the stage of time. Intermingled with all nations, but uniting with none,—distinguished by their attachment to one portion of revelation, and their aversion to another,—equally removed from the errors of polytheism, and the belief of christianity, they occupy a station peculiar to themselves: "they dwell alone, and are not reckoned among the people." In this state of seclusion, it seems generally taken for granted that they are not only enduring the frown of Providence, but that they are universally under the divine malediction, exposed to the doom of the impenitent and unbelieving. Their disbelief of the gospel is supposed, without any exception, to render them

liable to the penalties of eternal death. I have sometimes been tempted to doubt of this; and the design of my addressing you, on the present occasion, is briefly to state the grounds on which my doubts are founded, not with a view to provoke controversy, but solely to elicit the inquiry of superior minds.

1. An essential difference exists between the Jews and other unbelievers, in a particular of great moment; which is, that they are already in the possession of the oracles of God, and, in these, of all that is absolutely necessary to salvation. That the Old Testament is sufficient to conduct men to eternal life is evident, from the testimony it bears of itself, as well as from the acknowledged scope and design of a revelation; for it would be a reflection on infinite wisdom to suppose it capable of communicating a revelation which necessarily failed in its principal object, that of "making men wise unto salvation." Nor is it less certain that some of the eminent saints and favourites of the Most High flourished under the Jewish dispensation. The doctrines taught by Moses and the prophets, it must be confessed, are in themselves an adequate instrument of sanctification, so that, if he who conscientiously avails himself of it falls short of eternal life, it must be ascribed to the intervention of a subsequent and more perfect revelation.

2. As a subsequent dispensation however has been given, enforced by the penalty of eternal

death, it may be thought, this is sufficient at once to determine the future condition of those who reject it, and consequently to preclude the unconverted part of the Jews from all hope of salvation. It is agreed that the deliberate rejection of the gospel involves a sentence of condemnation: but that only can be said to be *rejected* which is adequately proposed. By the ancient Jews, christianity was rejected. Our Lord "came to his own, and his own received him not." They heard his discourses; they witnessed his miracles, or at least had the same evidence of them as they had of other matters of public notoriety; they beheld the spotless innocence of his life, and the perfect correspondence of the leading events of his history to the predictions of their prophets; nor was there any prejudice existing against christianity, but what was of recent growth, the pure effect of carnality, impenitence, and hardness of heart. They knew enough of the christian religion to discern its sanctifying tendency, and to hate it on that account: their rejection of it betrayed an enmity to the true character of God, and therefore incurred all the guilt included in that solemn assertion of our Lord, "But now they have both seen and hated both me and my Father." Their opposition to Christ was not the resistance made to the encroachments of a foreign dominion; it was domestic rebellion. The evidence of christianity was presented in all its force and splendour: it came into actual contact with the mind, and on that very account produced

a feeling of hostility to its spirit and its claims, which would not have been felt towards an object more remote.

3. But the position in which christianity stands towards modern Jews is very different. Their knowledge of it must be derived almost entirely from the New Testament, and the causes which may, in many instances, be supposed to divert their attention from it, are very dissimilar to those which originated the incredulity of their ancestors. The prohibition of the New Testament is a primary element in Jewish education. The absolute sufficiency of the writings of Moses and the prophets, and the impropriety of presuming to add to these lively oracles, and to abrogate an everlasting law, are among the first principles instilled into the infant mind. They are taught to repose with the utmost confidence on a religion which even christians confess to be of divine origin; while the system which has superseded it is comparatively of recent origin, and little accredited by its efficacy in correcting the vices and forming the manners of its followers. They are told, indeed, that christianity is the sequel and completion of the ancient religion,—that it substantiates its types and accomplishes its prophecies; but they are told so by those whom they have few inducements to regard. Respect for paternal authority, veneration for an illustrious ancestry, deference to age and rank, combine with the fear of innovation, and an attachment

though too exclusive, to Moses and the prophets, to keep them ignorant of the New Testament, and consequently estranged from the principal means of conviction. But the principles which we have alluded to are usually the strongest in the most virtuous and susceptible minds: nor is it difficult to conceive what an effectual bar they may prove to the perusal of the christian records, apart from those criminal prejudices which occasioned the rejection of christianity by their ancestors. The disbelief of christianity, on the part of such as have been trained on christian principles, can seldom, if ever, be imputed to ignorance—convictions must be stifled, and the force of evidence evaded; but the unbelief of modern Jews is the natural consequence of their want of acquaintance with an inspired record.

The portion of revelation which the Jew possesses already contains whatever is absolutely necessary to be known in order to obtain eternal life. Jews and christians, at variance about every thing else, unite their suffrages in its favour, affirming unanimously that it was for upwards of two thousand years the authentic revelation of the will of heaven. A Jew, therefore, cannot doubt of its competence to make him wise unto salvation. On the other hand, he is taught, from a quarter which God and nature enjoin him to revere, to look upon the New Testament as an imposture. In this instance, it is but candid to suppose that the records of our religion are neglected, not

always from the love of vice, or the predominance of worldly interests, but from a conscientious fear of innovation and dread of impiety. He is necessarily ignorant of a book which never engaged his attention; and that it failed to engage it is the effect of an exclusive, and in that respect only an erroneous, attachment to an inspiration of an earlier date.

4. Supposing him, from these and similar causes, to remain all his life unacquainted with the christian system, and consequently uninfluenced by its doctrines, have we any authority for asserting that he cannot possibly be the subject of divine grace, possessed as he is of an instrument of sanctification, which the Holy Ghost, for ages, condescended to employ? A new revelation can make no alteration in the intrinsic nature of that which precedes it; and, if the Old Testament ever was sufficient to make men wise unto salvation, why should we doubt of its being still competent for that purpose? Had it been the only companion of one that was shipwrecked on a desert island, shall we hesitate to believe that its serious perusal might be instrumental to his salvation? Here indeed the absence of other means of instruction would be the unavoidable consequence of providential arrangements, which cannot with equal propriety be affirmed in the case of our Jew. But, though his ignorance of the New Testament cannot be said to be the necessary consequence of the circumstances attending his birth and education, the obstacles which

they may be supposed to present are very powerful and not at all necessarily complicated with deep moral pravity. The utmost tenderness of conscience, the greatest solicitude for salvation, could not be supposed to prevent a youth strictly educated in the principles of judaism from contracting prejudices against christianity, the natural operation of which would be to indispose him to the perusal of its inspired records. The agency of the Spirit is of a moral, not a physical nature; nor is it his manner to interfere with the action of natural causes.

5. Admitting, however, that as much criminality attaches to the prejudice which keeps a conscientious Jew ignorant of the New Testament as the most zealous will contend for, it appears to be of the same order with that which operates in other instances, without our suspecting for a moment that it is incompatible with salvation. What shall we say of the prejudice which prompted such men as Pascal and Fenelon to reject the protestant doctrine, with which they were far better acquainted than a modern Jew can be supposed to be with the christian Scriptures ? The opportunities which they enjoyed, for satisfying themselves of the truth of the reformed religion, were, at least, equal to those which a Jew possesses for becoming an enlightened convert to the christian faith; and the circumstances, whatever they were, that indisposed those illustrious men to the impartial examination of the lutheran or calvinistic tenets, were neither

more numerous nor more powerful than those which produce a similar indisposition in Jews to investigate the evidence of our holy religion. Nor ought it to be forgotten that it is impossible to continue in the papal communion without committing idolatry, a sin against which the most fearful maledictions of scripture are pointed. Notwithstanding this, however, all candid protestants acknowledge the possibility of salvation within the Romish pale.

With all their prejudices and imperfections, it is contended that they maintained a body of saving truth, which, under the agency of the divine Spirit, was, it is charitably hoped, rendered effectual to their sanctification. But this is precisely the mode of reasoning we adopt in relation to a pious Jew. He also possesses a system of saving truth. He possesses, in the law and the prophets, what our Lord himself has affirmed to contain sufficient motives to repentance, together with that expectation of a future Messiah, and of the spiritual benefits he is appointed to confer, by which saints under the ancient economy were justified. Let it be carefully kept in mind that it is the bare possibility that a Jew, without becoming a convert to christianity, may obtain salvation, for which we contend; or, in other words, that we are not warranted to conclude that the Holy Spirit, on no occasion whatever, deigns to employ the ancient oracles for saving purposes. Of the extreme danger to which the great majority both of Jews

and papists are exposed, and of the strict propriety of speaking of them in the mass as in a state of alienation from God, we entertain no doubt; while we would indulge a hope, for similar reasons in both cases, that there will be found among both some with the "mark of God on their foreheads." The denunciations of divine vengeance on the patrons and supporters of the Roman hierarchy in the Apocalypse are as awful as words can express, and conceived in very general terms: "The smoke of their torment ascendeth," says John, "for ever and ever; and they have no rest day or night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name;" yet, notwithstanding these fearful menaces, we venture a charitable opinion of many who have been entangled in the errors of the papacy. We presume to hope that the merciful God will distinguish between the impious inventor of a system, and those who, without imbibing its spirit, have, in different degrees, been duped by its sophistry. And why should not a similar judgement be formed respecting a serious and conscientious Jew?

6. The question before us is, properly speaking, a question *de jure*, rather than *de facto*: it does not so properly relate to the fact whether there are any Jews in a state of salvation, who are not converts to christianity, as to the possibility of the thing. We know so little of the real character of modern Jews, insulated as they are from general society, that it is difficult to speak with any degree

of positivity on that subject. A general and superficial view of that people would tempt us to form the most melancholy conclusion. But I have been informed by a learned Jew, extensively acquainted with his own nation, that there are to be found amongst them men of a very different stamp from what is generally prevalent. He solemnly assured me that he knew one Jew in particular, a foreigner, who was accustomed to spend the night preceding their great fast, in the synagogue, prostrate in tears and supplications; and, on my asking what he was praying for, he replied, with some quickness, "For the pardon of his sins and the sins of his people, and for the speedy arrival of the promised Messiah:" he declared, at the same time, that this was not a solitary instance. Admitting this representation to be correct, (and there is nothing in it which exceeds the bounds of credibility,) I should feel little hesitation in believing that "He who delighteth in mercy" would not despise the prayer of such a penitent, because he wanted that explicit knowledge of Christ which was for ages withheld from the Jewish church. Prevented from attending to the evidences of christianity, by the influence of prejudices which it was extremely difficult for him to surmount, and, at all events, not more criminal than those which kept Fenelon within the trammels of popery, what should induce us to form such an opposite judgement, in two cases, as to place the latter in the list of eminent saints, while we consign the former to destruction? Dark as

popery is, we must allow that the respective degrees of illumination enjoyed in the two cases were very unequal, but the fainter of the two we must either confess is in itself saving, or give up the patriarchs and prophets for lost.

Perhaps it is unnecessary to remind your readers, that, while I plead for the possibility of a Jew's obtaining salvation without that clear and explicit knowledge of Christ which christians possess, I am far from supposing two distinct methods of salvation: whoever are justified, whether under the Jewish or christian economies, are alike justified by faith in the Messiah. But I am at a loss to perceive why that more vague and imperfect knowledge of his character supplied by Moses and the prophets, which formerly availed for that purpose, should necessarily be ineffectual now.

7. These views are, in my humble opinion, considerably confirmed by the tenour of the prophetic writings, which seem on various occasions to recognise a relation as all along subsisting between the Supreme Being and the Jews, previously to the period of their accession to the christian church. It appears to me evident, from ancient prophecy, that the scene of the future conversion of the Jews is their own land, where, it is probable, from Zechariah, that a supernatural interposition of the Messiah will take place in their favour, that he will suddenly reveal himself to them as a nation, and thus effect the accomplishment of the remarkable prediction recorded in the twelfth and thirteenth

chapters of that prophecy. Before their final deliverance, however, we read of a severe purgation, which they are destined to undergo, during which two parts shall be cut off, and a third only left, and that the third part is to be brought through the fire, and to be refined as silver is refined, and to be tried as gold is tried. "They shall call on my name, and I will hear them; I will say, It is my people, and they shall say, The Lord is my God." To the same purpose the prophet Ezekiel, where predicting, as I conceive, the final restoration of the Jews to their own land, tells us that previously to that event, the Lord "will plead with them in the wilderness of the people, as he pleaded with their fathers in the wilderness of Egypt; that he will bring them into the bond of the covenant, purge out from them the rebels and those that transgress, so that they shall not enter into the land of Israel:" and he adds, "Ye shall know that I am the Lord."

The latter chapters of Ezekiel, describing the erection of a certain temple, are involved in so much obscurity, that it seems difficult to arrive at any determinate conclusion respecting the import of that mysterious prophecy. It is certain that the attempt to spiritualize it produces little besides perplexity and confusion; nor have we any example in scripture of an allegory so perfectly dark and enigmatic as it must be confessed to be on that supposition. The third chapter of Hosea seems to present us with a just and striking picture of the

present condition of the Jews; they have remained "many days without a king, and without a prince, and without a sacrifice, and without an image, and without an ephod, and without a teraphim." Separated alike from christians and from heathens, they still retain their conjugal relation to the Lord; they are under his frown, but not severed from his covenant, and occupy a peculiar and intermediate station between the members of the christian church and the worshippers of idols.

The preceding remarks, let it be remembered, are designed to apply not to the great mass of the Jewish people, who appear to be in a state of deep alienation from God, but solely to such among them (if such there be) as are conscientious disciples of Moses and the prophets, and who, though they are destitute of the superior illumination of the gospel, faithfully improve the light which they enjoy.

The chief practical use to be derived from the hypothesis which I have ventured to suggest, is to inspire us with an increased tenderness and respect for the seed of Abraham, as containing, notwithstanding its occupying a distinct fold, a portion of the true church of God. If we can be induced to hope that he has still a people among them, we shall be ready to look upon them with something like fraternal affection, and to embrace every opportunity of reprobating and removing the cruel privations and restrictions imposed by christian nations, who, absurdly imagining that they do an

acceptable service to God by their persecution and depression, are in reality treasuring up wrath by aggravating the affliction of those whom he has smitten. It is surprising that any man can read the ancient prophecies with attention, without perceiving that he surveys the treatment of his ancient people with a jealous eye; and that, while he signalizes his displeasure against them by the course of his providence, he will enter into a severe reckoning with those who shall be found "to help on the affliction." A large arrear of guilt has been contracted by the nations of christendom on this account; and in this age of liberality, when such mighty efforts are made to procure the removal of political disabilities on the score of religion, it is surely high time their attention was turned to the relief of the oppressed and persecuted children of Abraham. Their political emancipation, and restoration to the equal rights of citizenship, might be reasonably expected to soften their prejudices, and dispose them to a more favourable hearing of the christian cause; nor could any thing be more becoming the character and pretensions of the Jewish Society than to take the lead in that noble enterprise. As the basis of all social virtue is laid in justice, so by none should its obligations be deemed more sacred than by those who make loud professions of christian zeal and exalted charity.

Having thus freely stated my present opinions upon a subject which I think has not often been

discussed, simply with a view to excite inquiry, I have no intention to enter into controversy by defending them, but shall cheerfully leave them to the consideration of your readers.

THE

SUBSTANCE OF A CHARGE,

DELIVERED AT THE ORDINATION OF THE REV. J. K. HALL, AT KETTERING, NOV. 8, 1815.

[*From the Notes of the Rev. S. Hillyard, of Bedford.*]

I SHALL not select any particular passage of scripture, as it is not my intention to confine myself to any one subject, but to communicate such miscellaneous hints of advice as may be suitable to the present occasion.

If, however, I refer to one passage more than another, it will be the exhortation of Paul to Timothy:—"Preach the word: be instant in season, out of season: reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all long-suffering and doctrine."

The solemn transactions of this day will not be done with when the service is closed: they will undergo a review at the tribunal of the great Judge, in whose name we are now assembled. Nothing in this state is final: every thing in time is connected with eternity. The church of Christ here, who have chosen you for their pastor, and you, my brother, who have accepted this office, will have

your determinations, your motives and your ends, adjudged by "Him who seeth not as man seeth," and will meet with a reward according to their sincerity and purity.

You now stand as a watchman, situated on an eminence; if you see danger you must "blow the trumpet," and warn the people, that "he that taketh warning may deliver his soul;" and "if any man take not warning, his blood shall be upon his own head;" if the people be not warned, they may be taken away in their iniquity; but "their blood," saith the Lord, "will I require at the watchman's hands."

You are a steward of the manifold mysteries of God, to bring out of the treasury "things new and old, that every one may have a portion." "Moreover, it is required of a steward that he be found faithful."

The principal duty of this office consists in your engagement to preach the gospel:—"Preach the word."

You will recollect that your work is not to dispense the principles inculcated by any human authority, or supported by any human society. Though the treasure of the gospel be communicated to "earthen vessels," its origin is celestial.

There is, then, little scope for the exercise of invention, or the flights of imagination, in the discharge of this duty: these faculties are employed to find out new principles, or to discover new associations; but their exercise here will only tend to mix truth

with error, to "darken counsel by words without knowledge," and to impair that system of truth which God hath furnished, and communicated to man. You are not required to make new discoveries; you need only to inquire, and ascertain, what is revealed in the word of God: find out what is "the mind of the Spirit," and submit yourself to his instructions. The best method of doing this, in connexion with reading and meditation, is to pray for spiritual illumination, like David, when he said, "Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wonderful things out of thy law." There are many wonderful things in the law; but we need the Spirit to give us *understanding*, and still more to cause us to feel the influence of truth in our own hearts, and to communicate it to the hearts of others.

There are three things to which you must attend in preaching; the matter, the mode, and the motives: the matter must be pure, the mode "with all gravity," the motives such as are presented in the word of God, and furnished by your office and your particular station in the church.

In preaching the word, incorruptness, or purity in your matter, is of the first importance: in order to this, adhere to the dictates of the holy Scriptures. I mean not, by this, that you should confine yourself to the words, but to the sentiments: the sentiments may be lost where the words are retained; but the sentiments may be retained and communicated in different expressions.

Preach the word purely and fully; mix nothing with it that does not belong to it, or may not evidently be inferred from its language.

State every doctrine and opinion as near to the mind of the Spirit as you can ascertain, by the most cautious inquiry.

The doctrines of the word you will bring forth in their full import, without concealing them, or endeavouring to melt them down and mould them so as to suit the prejudiced and indolent depravity of the human heart.

The gospel is not suited, and cannot be made to suit, the corrupt dispositions and inclinations of the carnal "mind;" but the faithful preaching of it is calculated to oppose, and to overcome, those evil prejudices so far as to excite men to attend to the doctrines it contains, and the blessings it proposes. It is your duty, not to bring down the gospel into a conformity with them, but to change them into a conformity with the gospel.

Read the Scriptures frequently, with close attention and fervent prayer. Endeavour to collect as much knowledge relative to revealed truth as you can possibly acquire. Out of the Scriptures you may continually draw new treasures; and if you are "a scribe well instructed in the mysteries of the kingdom," you will not find it difficult to present a variety of interesting matter from hence, that shall not only be profitable, but delightful to your hearers.

There are two opposite extremes to be avoided in *the manner* of your preaching the word: the

one, a manner vague and indistinct; the other, a manner too narrow, subtle, and systematical.

Some have preached the gospel rather by implication than by plain, direct statements: they have treated it as if there were something in its doctrines that would not bear the exhibition. Such men have made moral instructions the main points of their ministry: the doctrines of the atonement, regeneration, the divinity of the Saviour, and the riches of his grace, if they have not been entirely suppressed, have not occupied that prominent situation which their importance demands for them; and their hearers have consequently been altogether unacquainted with them, or, having but slight hold of them, these things have gradually slidden out of their minds, and left them prepared for heretical instructors. Be not, then, ashamed of the gospel; though it may contradict many of the fashionable and favourite notions of mankind, and though you may find mysteries connected with the subjects of it, which you cannot comprehend; yet, as we know but little of the world, and of ourselves less, we must receive with simplicity what God has taught. He *must* "be true, though every man be a liar."—You have taken upon you the solemn charge of "feeding the flock of God," you must keep back no part of what he has provided for them; let it be your concern, that at the end of your ministry you may be able to speak as St. Paul:—I kept back nothing that was profitable to you: I take you to record this

day, that I am pure from the blood of all men; for I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God."

Opposed to the vague and indistinct manner of preaching, is the narrow and systematical method, according to which, doctrines, sometimes not the most important, have been made the themes of remark and discussion, to the neglect of every other subject.

The gospel is not revealed in a systematic form; it is not confined to any particular set of doctrines; nor does it ever advance *any* doctrine as *merely* a subject of speculation.

Be upon your guard against confining your administrations; point out the practical consequences of the doctrines you preach, without which they will not produce that good which they are calculated to yield as they are revealed in the Scriptures. It is of great importance to observe the proportion which truths bear to each other, that we may not dwell upon subjects of comparatively small moment, to the neglect of others that are really weighty. We should not give too much of our attention to any favourite topics, however important; the effect of such a course will be to leave a wrong impression on the minds of the hearers. It will be likely to produce a disproportionate regard to some doctrines, ordinances, and moral duties; which is a similar deformity in the new man to the disproportionate enlargement of any particular member in the

human body; and it may be, that such regard to any doctrine, out of its connexion with other revealed truths, will only serve to exhibit it as a subject of speculation, and not of vital and practical utility.

An excellent man was so impressed with the doctrine of the divinity of Christ, that he made it the constant topic of his ministry; every sermon he preached was crowded with proofs, or answers to objections, relating to this important topic; and the result was, that most of his hearers became arians and socinians! This effect was not such as he anticipated, or as might be thought of at the time by others; but the consequence was natural. Such discussions produced, first, a dry speculative attention to the subject, then a fiery and contentious spirit in discussion; in this state the spirit of the doctrine was lost, and the people sunk into such a frame of mind as is suited to the reception of these or any other heresies that might be sophistically presented to them. A serious, spiritual state of mind is that which you must be concerned to promote in your hearers, as the best preservative against error: and, in order to this, you must proclaim both the doctrinal truth, and the practical exhortations of religion.

There has been long laid down a rule, which is often repeated, and is most excellent, and worthy of constant recollection: it is, that we must "preach the doctrines practically, and preach practice doctrinally." Preach the doctrines so as to

shew their influence on our practice, and recommend religious and virtuous conduct by evangelical motives. This happy combination will form a complete course of religious instruction. It is impossible to say which of these two, doctrinal or practical preaching, is most necessary; or which extreme is most dangerous—to preach doctrine without practice, or practice without doctrine. Read, then, the Scriptures of the New Testament, in order to observe how these are blended together by our Lord and his inspired apostles. You will observe *there*, that the enforcement of duties, by evangelical motives, is the very end of the gospel: and all preaching is good and estimable, only as it secures the same end by the same motives.

Be not afraid of devoting whole sermons to particular parts of moral conduct and religious duties. It is impossible to give right views of them, unless you dissect characters, and describe particular virtues and vices. The "fruits of the flesh," and the "fruits of the Spirit," must be distinctly pointed out. To preach against sin in general, without descending to particulars, may lead many to complain of the evil of their hearts, at the same time that they are awfully inattentive to the evil of their conduct.

You are aware, that to inculcate the necessity of regeneration is a large part of your work, and must not, on any account, be neglected; but it must not be so taught as to lead men to suppose that if they are once regenerated, they may be careless and

indifferent, for then they are sure of heaven. If you do not often address them with the utmost importunity, to guard them against sin, and to animate them to holiness, you will be chargeable with neglect. You must warn the righteous man that he turn not from his righteousness, as well as assure the wicked man that he will perish if he persevere in his wickedness. If serious admonitions are neglected, the preaching of regeneration itself may be very hurtful, by leading numbers to suppose, that, having passed the ordeal, nothing now remains but for them to wait their entrance into heaven, for which they will think they are already prepared. There is, we deeply lament, a sort of evangelical ministry which produces no effect but to awaken to a sudden apprehension of danger, and then to consign, by means of opiates, to the delusive and destructive stupidity of spiritual death.

When no pains are taken to warn the awakened of the necessity of deep repentance, of living faith, of persevering obedience, of unceasing vigilance, and of renewed conflicts, even unto the end, they are in danger of fancying they are "rich, and increased in goods, and have need of nothing," though they are "miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked."

Remind them that, when they enter on a christian profession, they only put on the armour: admonish them of the obligations they are under to be holy and active. They have entered as soldiers of the cross, they have taken the military

oath; but merely to take that, is not to perform the duty of a soldier. The display of bravery is to be made in the day of conflict, in their watching, standing, striving, and putting to flight the enemies of their salvation.

Exhort them, therefore, incessantly, that they "walk worthy of their high calling;" that they walk "as becometh the gospel of Christ;" that they "draw not back unto perdition;" that they be faithful unto death, that they may obtain "the crown of life."

I will now proceed to notice briefly those parts of your work which are not immediately connected with preaching the word; "Be instant in season, out of season," said the apostle. While engaged in ministering the word, you are instant in season; but you should also attend to your duties out of season, when it is not a time for preaching.

Remember, *this* people is *your charge*. When they are absent from you, bear them in your mind; let them have an interest in your prayers when you have retired to your closet: though they are your charge you cannot be always speaking to them; but they must be engraved on your heart, as the high priest bore the names of the tribes of Israel. The good shepherd is acquainted with all his sheep.

The excellent Booth has said, "He that does not pray oftener for his people than with them, neglects an important part of his duty." It will endear them to you, and draw out your affections

to them, if you pray much for them, and it will secure, through the divine blessing, your usefulness amongst them. You are, as an intercessor, to "stand in the breach;" and, whatever difficulty or danger may oppose, you must be, like another Moses, between God and the people.

Not only is secret prayer for them a great duty; but an habitual remembrance and affectionate respect for them must be cultivated when you are not, as well as when you are, ministering to them the word of life.

"Watch for them as one that must give an account:" take every favourable opportunity of speaking to them on the great concerns of eternity, and the weighty subjects of revealed truth. If you see any of them departing from the right way into that of sin, remember it is said, "Thou shalt not hate thy brother, but shalt reprove him." A neglect of reproof in such circumstances would have all the bad consequences of hatred; for thus he would be left to lie under the greatest evil from which you might deliver him. No fear of giving offence should prevent you from reproving, with meekness and faithfulness, the most opulent, or even the most valued friends of the society, if it be needful. If their misconduct does not require to be brought before the church, yet do not neglect to speak to them in private, and administer what counsel or reproof the circumstances may demand.

Your people will look to you, as a minister, for consolation when they are in distress; when over-

whelmed with personal, domestic, or other relative calamities: manifest towards them the tenderest sympathy, a disposition "to weep with them that weep," as well as to "rejoice with them that rejoice."

It will be especially your duty to attend to those who are beginning to seek and inquire after salvation. No part of your office is more delicate than the giving instruction to awakened consciences, who desire rest, but know not where or how to obtain it. The impressions they have received are in danger of wearing off; sometimes they seem pressing forward, sometimes they seem drawing backward; sometimes they are the pupils of conscience, at others the pupils of appetite and custom.

Such will require great attention; and not to seize opportunities of advising and directing them, would be to neglect a duty in which you ought to abound. It is not for me to instruct you fully *how* you should do this. Be not, however, afraid to inculcate repentance. Teach them to expect salvation, not *for* their works, but *in* a course of attention to all the dictates of the divine will respecting faith and obedience. Cherish in them tenderness of conscience, guard them against "easily besetting sins," and, at the same time, warn them not to stop at any outward reformation, but to seek after an inward change, and the application of the blood of Jesus. Admonish them not to consider themselves as having already attained, or being already perfect; not to mistake what is preparatory for what is final, or to rest short of that connexion with

Christ and conformity to him which are the pledge and commencement of life eternal.

Here we need divine assistance: it is best to learn these things in answer to prayer, and by habitual practice. As nothing but much practice, and an exact knowledge of the anatomy of the human frame, will make a skilful physician; so nothing but a knowledge of the human heart, and the efficacy of the gospel in healing the diseases of the soul, can teach us to bring men health and cure.

It will be useful to "exhort with much long-suffering, from house to house:" much is to be accomplished by those who have a talent for interesting and familiar religious conversation,—a talent which all should cultivate. Some ministers, by an exhibition of "the mind of Christ," and a recommendation of the truth, in private, have advanced religion even more than by their public ministry: as an auxiliary, every one will find it beneficial, and it is impossible to overvalue it.

See that your social visits are conducted in the spirit of the gospel. Guard against levity. Whatever is innocent in mirth, if it be allowed, should only hold a subordinate place; and the dignity of the minister should always appear.

Do not seek to cultivate the good opinion and favour merely of those who are rich, or even of those who are endowed with intellectual treasures; nor seek the gratifications of the table, nor the indulgence of sensual appetites. Despise not the meanest of the flock; look not on them with eyes

of the flesh, but with the eyes of the Spirit. You will then perceive that the distinctions of wealth, or education, or intellect, are but little, compared with the state of *all* as responsible and immortal beings. The points of difference in men are nothing, compared with the common capacity for knowing and enjoying God. They are to be regarded principally as vessels capable of experiencing the wrath, or receiving the mercy, of the Almighty.

Look upon them now, as you will look upon them on a dying bed: you will not think of them *then* as rich or poor, as learned or unlearned; but as sanctified or unsanctified, as "sheep or goats," as the righteous or the wicked, as persons with whom you are to rejoice for ever, or whose final ruin you must witness at the last day. Let nothing render you negligent of the improvement and comfort of any one. Remember who hath said, "Whoso shall offend one of these little ones, which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were cast into the depths of the sea." There is not *one* whose soul is not precious in the estimation of the Lord, not one for whom he has not shed his blood, not one for whom he would not have been ready to shed his blood, had no other soul existed. Let the dignity of human nature, viewed in this light, arm you against being imposed upon by any adventitious circumstance.

In order that you may attend to these duties aright, cultivate a devotional spirit. The more

you have of the mind of Christ, the more you walk in holiness and humility, the more "will your profiting appear." Watch against spiritual, as well as intellectual pride. Prostrate yourself in deep abasement before God. Remember, if you are saved, it is by an exercise of divine mercy, by an act of grace, which is the subject of admiration among the angels of God; and nothing is more incongruous than for "such an one" to be proud of any qualities he has received. Let it be evident that you are a good man, and one that makes progress in the things of God. This will produce a great effect. There is a silent eloquence in character, by which the best sermons are most powerfully recommended. Let *them*, however, be delivered with all sincerity, gravity, and affection: never speak with lightness or indifference; beware of all levity of spirit and of manner; avoid all canting and hypocritical terms and phrases; consider the weight of the subject before you; never study theatrical effect; all gestures and manœuvres, and display of *self*, by which some divines obtain so great admiration, are unworthy of your subject and your office. A sound preacher of the gospel will produce, not admiration of *himself*, but of the *truth*, and adoration of that God and Saviour from whom all truths proceed; remembering that awful account which ministers and people will all have to give, when they meet before his judgement-seat.

Sincerely aim to do good, and the Lord will be with you. Mr. Baxter said he never knew a

minister who was sincerely desirous of benefiting souls that was not blessed with considerable success. The more you can go out of self, and lose all recollection of your own importance; the more you are impressed with the love of souls, the more will you be likely to manifest that truth which recommends itself "to every man's conscience in the sight of God."

Let the consciences of your hearers be the subjects of your concern. Address their understanding and affections chiefly for the purpose of getting at their consciences.

I am aware of the difficulty of your situation, in consequence of your succeeding our most invaluable and incomparable brother, Mr. Fuller. It is not possible that you should, at present, attain to that profundity of mind, those extensive views, and that pointed statement of truth, which were possessed and evinced by him; but even the difficulty thus arising may be of use to you, as a stimulus to excite you to greater exertions. Should you be tempted to indolence, (which, however, I have no reason to suspect you will indulge,) the recollection of serving a people who have been blessed with such a minister, the consideration of what they will expect, may serve to rouse and animate you in your work.

Another circumstance I may refer to, as a motive peculiar to your present situation; and that is, the respectable minority which have been opposed to you. This may also be overruled to your advantage, if you are more watchful over your temper

and conduct (I do not say than you have been, but) than you might have been if you had been carried down the stream of universal applause; and, if it excite you to conciliation and kindness towards those who oppose themselves, it may have the happiest effect on their minds, and will certainly raise and establish your character as a minister of the meek and lowly Saviour.

I need not warn you, because you have always guarded, against any thing personal in your ministry towards those who have not fixed their choice on you. You will be ready to treat them with the same kindness which you manifest to others. It is not to be wondered at, (considering whom you follow, and some particular circumstances which are well known, but need not be mentioned,) that there should be a part of the church who could not act with the rest in their choice; but it will be well if you can manage these circumstances for your advantage and the furtherance of the gospel.

I shall not detain you longer than to remind you whence it is that you are to derive the strength and wisdom necessary to prepare you for your work; and I cannot do this better than in the language of Paul to Timothy, "Be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus!" Be strong! How strangely does this exhortation sound! To tell a man that is weak to be strong, would be absurd; but what would be absurd in philosophy is true and perfectly consistent with the gospel. Be strong in the grace of Christ, for his grace is communicable; and the power of Christ

rests on those who seek it with a sense of their own weakness.

We are directed to seek it by prayer, and thus to be strong. Look to the Lord for all the assistance you need. Remember how dependent you are. Look to the Father and the Son: be not afraid of praying to the Son of God as Paul did; it is often more consolatory than prayer in any other form.*

You are a sinner redeemed; but you are a preacher of the word placed over this people, not to tyrannize, but to walk before them in the Lord: in hearing your voice, they should hear him; in following your footsteps, they should follow him. Your employment is that of the Son of God: it makes no appearance before the eyes of worldly men; but it will arise in a form of majesty to overshadow all created glory. Its effects will be known and felt in souls that shall enjoy Christ in his kingdom for ever, or in spirits in whom the work of death shall be finished.

Keep the commandments of Christ committed to you, without reproach. Endeavour to "present every man faultless before God." Your happiness will be diminished if one be wanting. Be concerned to "give up your account with joy, and not with grief."

Labour, that not one of those that hear you, not one that has sat down at the table of the Lord, not one to whom you have "given the right hand of fellowship," should be excluded when the Lord cometh.

* See letter to W. Hollick, Esq. Vol. V. p. 515.—Ed.

See to it, that you are not excluded yourself. So preach as to "save yourself, and them that hear you." It is possible for a man to bring others to Christ for salvation, and yet not be saved himself. You may preach to others, and yet be a cast-away. You need grace, but do not despair. The grace of the Saviour is sufficient for you: "His strength shall be made perfect in your weakness."*

* Mr. John Keen Hall, to whom this charge was addressed, was Mr. Hall's nephew; a circumstance which, while it may serve to account for the minuteness of some of the exhortations, in my judgement, adds to their interest. Mr. J. K. Hall, who had been Mr. Fuller's colleague, survived him only fifteen years: he died in 1829.

Mr. Hillyard, to whose kindness I am indebted for the notes here published, is anxious it should be understood that his main object was to preserve *the substance* of the charge. It was seldom, indeed, that he succeeded in catching the precise language; and, towards the end, several sublime and most impressive sentences were entirely lost, from his yielding himself to the stream of feeling excited by the preacher.—Ed.

ON THE ART OF HEALING.

[From Mr. Hall's own Notes. Not published before.]

Matt. ix. 12.—*But when Jesus heard that, he said unto them, The whole need not a physician, but they that are sick.*

That the sick need a physician,* is an assertion which appeals to the dictates of common sense. Among the innumerable benefactions issuing from a wise and gracious Providence, the art of healing is not to be considered as the least. For, though it is far from having reached the perfection which we naturally desire, or which may be attainable, its efficiency is such, as ought to inspire the most unfeigned gratitude to the Author of every good and perfect gift. By the cure of many, and the mitigation of most, of the diseases to which the human frame is incident, the total amount of ease, comfort, and refreshment, which it confers is incalculable. In judicious hands it is the handmaid of nature, while it obeys her indications and assists her efforts. It never acts apart, but always in a vigilant and judicious subserviency to her

* This constituted part of a sermon that was preached for the Leicester Infirmary, from the above text, on Sunday, May 29, 1825.—Ed.

fundamental laws and her salutary tendencies. It is well known that there is in all living substances a certain *vis medicatrix*, a certain effort at self-provision, an inherent and powerful tendency to recover itself from the injury it may have sustained, a principle of active resistance to the progress of disease and decay. A property of this kind seems to be inseparable from life in all its diversified modes and appearances; and nothing, surely, can afford a plainer demonstration of the benign character of the Deity.

When a bone is fractured, nothing more is necessary than to place the parts, which accident has separated, in their original juxta-position, and they will very soon adhere: an exudation from the bones takes places, which forms a collar of so firm a texture, that the parts often become more perfectly united than before: it is scarcely ever known that a bone is fractured twice in the same place. When the fleshy parts are separated by a wound, and a considerable chasm ensues, the self-restorative power of nature forms new flesh, produces a new set of vessels for the circulation of the blood: the interstice is filled up, and the continuity of the parts is by degrees perfectly restored. The indication of design in such a process is just as evident as in restoring communication betwixt two places, by repairing the broken arches of a bridge.

In constant subserviency to this mysterious law, the skilful physician explores the secret affinities

subsisting betwixt the living substance which composes the body and the material elements which surround it. By a sublime process of experiment and induction, he has ascertained, to a great extent, the relation which the corporeal frame sustains to the various objects, both natural and artificial, with which the stores of nature are fraught. He has extorted her secrets, and has summoned her powers in aid of human distress and infirmity. He has fetched from the bowels of the [earth], from the caverns of the ocean, and from the boundless fields of air, the most powerful antidotes to disease. He has levied a contribution from all the departments and provinces of nature, and compelled them to yield their service to man, in all the varieties of physical disorder to which he is exposed; and, whether it be requisite to brace or to relax the [fibres] of the breathing frame, to retard or to accelerate its motion, to stimulate or to depress, to quicken its energies or to allay its agitations, he makes them minister to his purpose, and become the agents of his will. He has discovered the art of converting into useful ingredients, substances deemed essentially noxious, and of extracting antidotes from poisons. Thus he vindicates from rash and presumptuous imputations the beneficence of nature or of its great Author, by shewing that all which "he has made is very good."

A large portion of the ingenuity and industry of mankind is incessantly exerted in multiplying

the pleasures of the opulent, giving a higher zest to the fruitions of luxury, and gratifying the caprices of vanity and pride; and, such is the mechanism of society, that even from these the poor are fed and the indigent relieved. With the physician, however, it is far otherwise. He interposes in the moment of exigence, and obeys the call of distress. He administers the cordial to the fainting spirit, rekindles the expiring lamp of hope, and [often] decks the countenance with smiles, which death, under the ravages of disease, had marked for his victim and covered with his shade. He leaves it to others to accompany the human race in their revelry and their triumphs: while they bask on the bosom of the ocean, or spread their sails to the wind, he presents himself on the shore, and rescues the shipwrecked mariner from the waves. With a silent and invisible energy he contends with the powers of destruction, and often rescues from the grave him that [seemed] "appointed to death."

If he conducts the objects of his care sometimes through painful processes, his proceeding resembles, in that respect, the conduct of the gracious Author of our being, who afflicts with paternal reluctance, and smites but to heal. From the practice of an enlightened professor of the healing art, nothing is more remote than the infliction of unnecessary suffering, or wanton and unfeeling experiments on the powers of human endurance. His hand never administers an uneasy

sensation, but with a view to the future comfort of his patient: nor is he the author of a single privation or restraint but what is designed for his good.

Considered in their leading features, its ministrations are a beautiful imitation of those of Divine Providence. Both are designed to restore what is lost, and to repair what is disordered: both have the production of ease and happiness for their ultimate object; both frequently make use of pains and privations as the means of procuring it, but neither of them [employ] an atom more of these than is deemed requisite for that purpose.

Hence it will probably be found that the medical profession has furnished more examples of active and enlightened humanity than any other walk or profession. Being daily and hourly conversant with scenes of misery, the contrary, it would seem at first, might have been expected. It might have been thought that habit would render [medical men] callous and indifferent to those varieties of suffering that so frequently offer themselves to their view. That the effect of such familiarity is to impair the force of pity, considered merely as an emotion, may be very probable. It is well it is so: for if their nerves were unstrung, and their hand to tremble at the witnessing of pain and agony, like those who were unused to such spectacles, they would be totally disabled from executing their functions. But humanity, considered as an active propensity to alleviate human distress,

is improved and maintained in wholesome exercise by the benevolence of the end, notwithstanding the occasional severity of the means. The mind of a physician is continually pregnant with expedients for the mitigation of pain, the extinction of disease, and the prolongation of life; a course of thinking which cannot fail to cultivate and mature the seeds of benevolence. His success is in exact proportion to the benefits he imparts: his triumphs are signalized by the tears of gratitude, the gratulations of friendship, and the raptures of returning health.

How striking is the contrast betwixt the art of medicine and the art of war! The last has for its object the destruction, the first the preservation, of the species. The mind of the warrior teems with machinations of ruin, and anxiously revolves, among different schemes that present themselves, which shall scatter destruction to the widest extent and with the surest aim: his progress is marked by devastation and blood, by depopulated fields and smoking villages, and the laurels which he wears are bedewed with the tears of widows and orphans. The acclamations which he wins from one portion of his species are answered by the curses and execrations of another; and the delusive splendour, the proud and imposing array, with which he contrives to gild the horrors of his profession, are but the pomp and retinue of the king of terrors.* The art of healing proceeds with a

* The author seems here to have borrowed a little, perhaps unconsciously, from himself. See Vol. I. p. 97, &c.—Ed.

silence and secresy, like the great processes of nature, to scatter blessings on all within its reach; and the couch of sickness, the silent retreat of sorrow and despair, are the scene of its triumphs.

The little applause which is bestowed on physicians, compared with what is so lavishly heaped on conquerors, conveys a bitter reflection on human nature; by shewing how much we suffer ourselves to be the dupes of our senses, to extol the brilliant rather than the useful: whereas, a just and impartial estimate would compel us to assign to skilful practitioners of medicine the very first rank among merely human professions. For, when we consider the variety of ills to which we are exposed, and how large a portion is derived from bodily infirmities, it will appear that we are more indebted to their assistance than to [that of] any other class of persons whatever.

Nor are the reflections in which we have indulged, and the train of thought we have pursued, foreign to the immediate purpose of the present discourse, which is to invite your assistance in repairing the funds of the Leicester Infirmary, an institution which you are aware has been productive of incalculable good. Open to the sick of all denominations, it assembles within its walls the victims of poverty and disease of every description, and provides for them the most suitable diet, skilful advice, and assiduous attentions; of each of which the greater part of its patients must necessarily have remained destitute, but for this excellent

charity. If we are convinced of the utility and dignity of the medical and chirurgical arts; if we are satisfied how much they contribute to the comfort and the preservation of life, we are prepared to appreciate the value of that charity which proposes for its object the extension of these advantages to the poor; nor is it possible to extend them so far by any other provision as by the support of a public asylum.

To administer equal medical assistance and attendance to an equal number at their own abodes, would be accompanied by an augmentation of expense which would render it insupportable. By collecting the victims of disease in our asylum, and placing them under one system of administration, not only is economy consulted by an immense saving of expense; but the improvement of science is promoted, by presenting a wide field of observation on the great varieties of malady which fall under the notice of the practitioners.

By this system also, a course of wholesome religious instruction is secured, under circumstances the most favourable to its reception.

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The chemical lectures, delivered by the ablest professors in our public hospitals, furnish the most important branch of medical instruction, and are adapted to benefit generations yet unborn.

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The erection of hospitals and infirmaries for the poor, is one of the distinguishing ornaments and

fruits of christianity, unknown to the wisdom and humanity of pagan times. Compassionate consideration of the poor formed no part of the lessons of pagan philosophy; its genius was too arrogant and lofty to stoop to the children of want and obscurity. It soared in sublime speculation, wasted its strength in endless subtleties and debates; but, among the rewards to which it aspired, it never thought of "the blessedness of him that considereth the poor." You might have traversed the Roman empire, in the zenith of its power, from the Euphrates to the Atlantic, without meeting with a single charitable asylum for the sick. Monuments of pride, of ambition, of vindictive wrath, were to be found in abundance; but not one legible record of commiseration for the poor. It was reserved for the religion, whose basis is humility, and whose element is devotion, to proclaim with authority, "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy."

There are few of us, I trust, who are prepared to regard the privations of poverty alone, with indifference; much less when, combined with sickness, its victim is reduced to the last stage of helplessness. When the hands which ministered, not only to their own necessities, but to those of a numerous family, are debilitated with disease, and unnerved with sickness, the most complicated distress must necessarily ensue. Were it not for the ministration of piety, the calamity would be insupportable. In many situations, the earnings of

labour are but barely sufficient for the sustenance of life on its lowest terms; no savings can be made; no superfluity be retrenched; and what must be the state of such a family when that labour is suspended by the invasion of disease? But for such asylums as these, the consequences would be too dreadful for human contemplation.

(Sickness incident to all, and therefore a proper object of commiseration.)

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Digitized with financial assistance from the
Government of Maharashtra
on 13 February, 2016